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Nick Carter Stories

THE WOLF WITHIN
OR
NICK CARTER'S WOMAN
IN GRAY

NICK CARTER STORIES

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THE WOLF WITHIN;

Or, NICK CARTER'S WOMAN IN GRAY.

Edited by CHICKERING CARTER.

CHAPTER I.

THE GIRL WHO FLED.

There is no deeper darkness in New York City than the inky gloom that shrouds dark deeds and hides foul crimes.

There was light in Forty-fourth Street.

The glare from the lamps of moving and motionless motor cars revealed every object in the broad thoroughfare with the distinctness of noonday. A blaze from the huge windows and over the broad, illumined entrance of the vast hotel threw into relief every passing pedestrian, every arriving patron, every departing guest, and a score of porters, hackmen, chauffeurs, and—a solitary policeman.

It does not appear in printer's ink and tourist guide books—the name herein applied to this very popular and fashionable hotel. Consideration for persons innocently involved in the tragic episode of that fateful night requires that a fictitious name shall shield them from a publicity that would otherwise be inevitable.

It was half past eight by the city clocks.

The day was Monday, and the month October.

Two men among other passers-by were approaching a side entrance of the house. One of them was the celebrated detective, Nick Carter, and his companion was his junior assistant, Patsy Garvan. They were heading for home after a prolonged conference with a criminal lawyer residing in that locality.

"We shall be late for dinner, Patsy," Nick was remarking. "We had better drop in at the Orville House, perhaps, instead of going home."

"It's up to you, chief," replied Patsy. "They fry chickens here to beat the band, and—well, I wouldn't do a thing to a broiler and dish of French fried."

Nick laughed—then suddenly checked himself and halted, placing a restraining hand on Patsy's arm.

"One moment," he muttered, watching a woman who had emerged from the side door of the hotel.

Nick had caught sight of her face for only an instant, when she hurriedly readjusted a voluminous lace veil over her stylish hat, quickly concealing her features.

It was a dark, strikingly handsome face, with clean-cut features, a velvety complexion, a full red mouth, and large, luminous black eyes, the face of a girl who had hardly turned twenty.

She wore a tailor-made suit of dark blue, fitted like a glove to her lithe, sinuous, but well-rounded figure. She walked quickly away, alert and graceful, a creature evidently throbbing with youthful strength and vitality, and in a moment she turned the corner of Forty-fourth Street, and hastened toward Third Avenue.

"Did you recognize her?" Nick asked.

"I didn't see her face," replied Patsy. "Who is she?"

"Rita Carvalli."

"Rita Carvalli?"

"Don't you remember? Her name is, in reality, Theresa Carvalli."

"Oh, gee!" exclaimed Patsy. "Sure thing, chief, I remember. She's that Italian girl whose brother, Tomaso Carvalli, was murdered about a year ago by Phil Langham."

"If reports are true."

"If? Is there any doubt about it?"

"There is always room for a doubt, Patsy, until a man is proved guilty."

"But Langham was seen to shoot Carvalli. Half a dozen witnesses testified to that."

"Five was the correct number."

"Let it go at five, then," said Patsy. "That should be sufficient to clinch it."

"Not entirely so, Patsy, in my opinion."

"Why?"

"Because three of the five were Italians, and personal friends of Carvalli," said Nick. "They were, moreover, members of the Tony Garcia gang, including himself, as bad a coterie of thugs as exists from Harlem to the Battery. Tony, th Tiger, as he is called, is certainly a bad egg. The other two men were of the same stamp, and I never bank very heavily on the assertions of such fellows."

"But why, if innocent, did Langham take leg bail?" argued Patsy inquiringly. "Why didn't he face the music like a man, and fight the case to a finish? He fled immediately after the crime, even before he knew positively that Carvalli was dead, and he has never been run down. He hasn't even been heard from, if reports are true, and some think he has committed suicide. That flight was, in my opinion, equivalent to an admission of his guilt."

"It was one bad feature of the case," Nick allowed.

"What was said to be the motive for the murder, anyway?" questioned Patsy.

"Langham's relations with Rita Carvalli," replied Nick. "Her brother objected to them, and he threatened Langham, and Langham is said to have lost his head and shot him."

"Humph!" grunted Patsy. "Was Rita Carvalli a model of propriety twelve months ago, when the murder was committed? If so, she has gone to the bad on greased rollers since then. They say that she now is one of the intimate friends of Gideon Preston, manager and part owner of this hotel. He's a swell sport, all right, and she may have just been here to see him."

"Quite likely," said Nick. "She has only one redeeming feature, that girl."

"Namely?"

"Her beauty. It's the kind that turns men's heads, or the heads of some men would be more correct. If she were as virtuous as she is beautiful—well, she would have wings and a halo."

"Die young, eh?" said Patsy, with a laugh. "I've heard that the good die young, but Rita Carvalli will never croak because of her goodness. She more likely will send other poor fellows to the devil, as she did Phil Langham, unless some one gives her a free ticket and quick passage over the Styx. She—hello! what's up?"

A hallboy in livery had rushed out of the hotel, and was talking excitedly to a policeman near the front entrance, toward which Nick and Patsy had sauntered.

Rita Carvalli had disappeared.

The policeman wheeled sharply around and hurried into the house.

"Something wrong," Nick said tersely. "Get a move on. We'll find out."

"I'm with you," said Patsy, alert on the instant.

They hastened up the broad marble steps and into the spacious main office of the hotel. Many people were there, guests, visitors, idlers conversing in groups, smoking in solitary enjoyment of an after-dinner cigar, or lounging over their newspapers in the red leather chairs. None appeared disturbed, or to have observed anything of a sensational nature.

Nick quickly saw that two of the clerks in the office inclosure were quite pale and awed, however, and also that the hotel manager, Gideon Preston, was hastening to join the policeman, having come from the direction of his private office.

Nick strode across the tessellated floor toward a corridor leading to the elevators, in which direction the policeman and hallboy were hastening. Preston caught sight of the detective at the same moment, and he turned to meet him with his countenance lighting a little.

He was an erect, well-built man in the forties, smooth shaved and distinguished looking, with wavy dark hair, and an attractive face. He was the type of man quick to impress other men favorably, and to easily win the admiration and affection of the opposite sex. These personal qualities had contributed much to his success as manager of the Orville House.

Nick had a speaking acquaintance with him, merely that, but Preston said quite familiarly:

"Thank the Lord, Carter, that you turn up at just this moment."

"What's the trouble, Mr. Preston?" Nick inquired.

"Not too loud," cautioned Preston. "A stir will create alarm, and that will do no earthly good. A man has been killed in room seventy-eight."

"Murdered?"

"I judge so."

"When?"

"I don't know. I have not been up there. The body was discovered just now by a hallboy, who reported to me. I sent him out for Fallon, our special policeman. He——"

"Where was your house detective?"

"Darcy—he's dead! He's the victim of the crime."

"Good Lord!" Nick exclaimed. "John Darcy dead—murdered! Can it be possible?"

Nick knew him very well, had known him for several years, and they had been very good friends. He also knew that Darcy, though he had turned sixty years, was a capable and courageous officer, an expert detective, and a man of sterling character.

Darcy had been the house detective since the Orville House opened its doors to the public three years before, and Nick found it hard to believe, despite that mysterious robberies had been committed in the hotel, which, in a way, threatened to hoodoo the house, that these had been capped with the murder of such a cool and level-headed man as John Darcy.

Gideon Preston, while stating the case, had led the way to the nearest elevator. Fallon, the policeman, had seen the others approaching, and he was waiting with the hallboy, a young man named Brown, and he touched his cap respectfully when Nick joined them.

"I'm glad you happened to be here, Mr. Carter," said he. "This is more in your line than mine, if what this chap says is true."

"Are you the one who discovered the body?" asked Nick, addressing the hallboy, as they stepped into the elevator.

"Yes, sir," said Brown, quite white and trembling. "I ran down and told Mr. Preston and the office clerk. That was only a couple of minutes ago."

"How did you happen to discover it?"

"I was coming through the corridor after answering a call on the same floor, sir, and I saw that the door of

seventy-eight was open a few inches, and that the lights were on. I didn't hear anybody talking, however, and, thinking the door might have been left open by accident, I looked into the room. I saw the body, and——"

"This way, Nick," Mr. Preston interrupted. "You shall see for yourself. Do, for God's sake, dig out the truth, if possible. It seems almost as if the devil had reigned in this house during the past year. We've had nearly a dozen bad robberies, and now—this is ten times worse! Here's seventy-eight."

The elevator had taken them only up to the second floor.

Upon leaving it, and stepping into the heavily carpeted corridor, Nick made a mental note of the surroundings, which should be remembered.

Built around the elevator shaft was a stairway, leading both to the floors above and to the corridor from which he had just ascended.

Some twenty feet away was another stairway, leading down to the side door from which Rita Carvalli had emerged hardly five minutes before.

To the right, the direction in which Nick had been conducted, was a small parlor adjoining the stairway next to the elevator shaft. It was designed for the use of persons entering from the side street and having occasion to wait on that floor.

Beyond the parlor was a series of adjoining suites, the doors of which were numbered consecutively, that next to the parlor being No. 77.

It was at the next suite, No. 78, that Preston had halted for a moment, as if he dreaded to view the scene of so shocking a crime.

Nick Carter was accustomed to such scenes. He at once opened the door and entered.

CHAPTER II.

CONFLICTING EVIDENCE.

The suite into which Nick Carter led the way consisted of a sitting room with a curtained alcove, containing a bed and bureau, and with a small adjoining bathroom.

All were very finely furnished. A window in the sitting room overlooked a paved area between two sections of the building. The roller shade was closely drawn. A single electric lamp of a large brass chandelier was burning.

One glance at the scene convinced Nick that a brutal murder had, indeed, been committed.

Though the sitting room was in customary order in other respects, a handsome desk in one corner had been forced open with a tool of some kind. The lock was broken, and splinters from one of the drawers were lying on the floor.

The bed in the alcove was in disorder. The linen and blankets had been thrown over the foot of it. One piece of the mattress had been partly pulled off, and was hanging over the side of the bed, that side nearest the sitting room.

Lying across the bed, and partly on the exposed spring, with his arms extended and his feet touching the floor, was the body of a stocky, dark-featured man, with grizzled hair. He was dead. His garments, also part of the mattress, were saturated with blood. He had been stabbed twice in the breast.

Either wound would have proved fatal. The second must have killed him instantly, for the blade of the weapon, the haft of which still protruded from his breast, had penetrated his heart.

The man was the house detective, John Darcy, as the hallboy had reported.

He was clad in a dark suit, and his soft felt hat was lying on the floor.

Obviously, he had been killed after a very brief, but equally desperate, struggle.

Nick Carter took in with a few swift glances these features of the scene. He also observed an open trunk in a wardrobe closet, and a quantity of garments hanging on hooks in the wall, some of them the dresses of a woman.

Disregarding the exclamations of horror and dismay that broke from Preston, as the detective's companion followed him into the suite, Nick at once took up the task devolving upon him—that of solving the mystery and seeking the trail of the criminal.

"Close the door, Patsy, and lock it," he commanded. "Don't disturb anything, Preston, nor walk around before I have made an investigation. Wait right where you are, all hands. I'll do what should be done here during the next few minutes."

"Hadn't I better call the house physician? Darcy——"

"Darcy is dead," Nick interrupted, bending over the body and feeling of one wrist. "A physician can do nothing for him. The body is still quite warm. He has not been dead longer than ten minutes. Who occupies this suite, Mr. Preston?"

"Colonel Henry Ascott and his wife, of Louisville, Kentucky. They have been here about two weeks."

"What do you know about them?"

"Not very much. Colonel Ascott is about sixty, and evidently a wealthy man. He was married a month ago to a handsome Louisville widow, in the thirties. They are here on a wedding trip."

"Have you seen them this evening?"

"I saw them at dinner soon after six o'clock. I have not seen them since then."

"I have, Mr. Carter," put in Fallon. "I saw them take a taxicab just before eight. Mrs. Ascott wore an opera cloak, and I think they have gone to the theater."

"Did they have any companions?"

"No, sir."

"Have they been receiving many visitors, Preston?"

"None that I know of. They appear to have no acquaintances here, and to be absorbed only in their own amusements."

"Has Mrs. Ascott any valuable jewelry?"

"Yes, I think she has. I know that she has, in fact, for one of the clerks spoke to her about putting it in the safe when not in use. We have had several mysterious robberies in this house, you know, and we are taking every precaution to protect our guests. Mrs. Ascott informed the clerk, however, that she thought she could take care of her property."

Nick glanced at the broken desk, then into the trunk mentioned, and the bureau drawers. The garments in all of them were in much disorder.

"The cause of the murder is obvious," said he, after a moment. "The broken desk, the garments turned topsy-turvy in the trunk and bureau, the mattress pulled partly from the bed—all point to the hurried work of a thief."

"Good heavens!" gasped Preston, starting perceptibly. "Another robbery?"

"An attempted robbery, at least, and probably a successful one, unless Mrs. Ascott is wearing her jewels, or has some secret hiding place for them which the thief did not discover. That cannot be determined until she returns."

"But——"

"The evidence admits of no reasonable argument, Preston," Nick insisted. "This suite was invaded by a robber, most likely the same who has committed other depredations in this house. He either was heard by Darcy, or the detective suspected he was here, for Darcy certainly entered and undertook to arrest him. There was a brief struggle, and the crook killed him."

"But Darcy must have been armed," Preston persistently argued. "How could he have been caught napping by a burglar?"

"The minor circumstances can only be conjectured at present," Nick replied. "It is perfectly plain that the crook had searched the desk, the trunk, the bureau drawers, and stripped the bed for the same purpose. All that must have been done before the detective entered the room."

"Certainly. There is no denying that."

"Darcy entered, and the crook got the best of him by some means, or some clever trick," Nick continued. "That appears in that there was no great struggle. Aside from the blood with which they are covered, his garments are not in disorder, as would have been the case if there had been a prolonged fight. Here are two scratches on his neck, showing that the crook throttled him, and then stabbed him, forcing him backward on the bed. It was all over, probably, in less than half a minute."

"You may be right."

"I know I am right, Preston, as far as I have gone."

"Gee!" Patsy suddenly exclaimed. "Here is something, chief, that may cut ice."

Lifting the corner of a blanket that was lying partly on the floor, Patsy had discovered a false mustache and beard, made in a single piece, which until then had been concealed by the blanket. It was of dark-red color, and nearly new.

Nick examined it carefully. It did not bear the name of the maker, nor that of any costumer. It was significant only in that it showed that the murderer had entered in disguise, but had departed without it, or wearing another.

"Have you seen any man with whiskers like these, Preston, around the hotel?" Nick inquired.

"No, I have not. One of the clerks may have seen such a man."

"I will inquire of them a little later. Lend me a hand, Patsy. I wish to examine this weapon."

Nick had turned to the bed and was bending over the corpse of the murdered detective. Patsy hastened to aid him, and, with gentle fingers, Nick drew the weapon from the wound, then took it into the bathroom, and cleansed it.

It proved to be a dagger with a double-edged blade, six inches long and half an inch wide. It was a very old one, and the name of the maker had been ground out of the blade, while the ivory haft was discolored and defaced.

"A foreign weapon," Nick remarked to Patsy, who had followed him into the bathroom. "It never was made in this country. It looks like a product of Syria, or Italy."

"You've not forgotten Rita Carvalli, chief?" questioned Patsy, whispering.

"Not by a long chalk," Nick muttered. "But say nothing."

"I'm dumb."

"Poor Darcy!" Nick added. "I'll hunt down the miscreant who did this job, Patsy, if I lie awake nights to find a way."

"There seems to be little more to be found here, chief," said Patsy. "I made a pretty thorough inspection of the suite while you were talking."

"So I observed. We will presently look farther. Wrap the weapon and this disguise in your handkerchief, and slip them into your pocket. They will be needed later."

Patsy hastened to obey.

Nick resumed his search, but soon learned that no other tangible evidence was to be found. The window mentioned was securely locked. The door had not been forced, but evidently had been opened with a duplicate key. Nothing in the bathroom denoted that the murderer had lingered even to cleanse his hands after committing the sanguinary deed.

Nick had required less than ten minutes for these investigations. Then, turning to Preston, who had been impatiently waiting, he said shortly:

"That's all. Let's see, now, what we can learn outside. Leave this room as it stands for the present."

"But I must provide for Colonel Ascott and his wife when they return," Preston protested.

"You'll have time enough for that, if they have gone to the theater. Half an hour will be all I shall require. Who occupies the two suites adjoining this one?"

"Number seventy-seven, between this and the parlor, is occupied by a man named Arthur Greenleaf. He's an Englishman, I suppose, for he has registered from London. He has been here nearly a month."

"And the other?"

"I don't know. I think it was vacant yesterday. It may have been assigned to some one to-day."

"Let's see whom we can raise."

Nick returned to the corridor, where he knocked on the door of No. 79. It brought no response.

"Go and ask the clerk, Patsy, whether this suite is taken," he directed, and Patsy hastened down the stairs.

Nick then knocked on the door of No. 77, the suite adjoining the parlor. A voice called promptly:

"Come in."

The detective entered, followed by Gideon Preston, while Fallon and the hallboy remained in the corridor.

A ministerial-looking man was seated at a table. He appeared to be about sixty years old. His hair was gray, and he wore a beard. Astride his nose was a pair of black-rimmed glasses, from the loop of which hung a black silk cord worn around his neck. He held a pen, and a great pile of manuscript was lying on the table.

"Dear me!" he exclaimed, rising when he saw Manager Preston. "I supposed you were a hallboy with my ice water. I always have it brought to my room about nine. Take a seat, Mr. Preston, and your friend, also, if he——"

"Thank you, but I shall remain only a moment," Nick interposed. "You must excuse us for disturbing you, but there has been a crime committed in the adjoining suite. I wish to know whether you have heard any disturbance from that direction."

"A crime!" echoed Mr. Greenleaf, raising both hands.

"Dear me, how dreadful! I hope it is nothing very serious. A disturbance—why, yes, but nothing that impressed me deeply. I supposed that some one was moving a piece of furniture. I heard a sound as if something had fallen."

"How long ago, Mr. Greenleaf?"

"Well, I should say about twenty minutes. It may have been a little less, possibly a little more. When absorbed in my work, a book that I am writing, I lose all appreciation of time."

"Did you hear anything else?"

"I did not."

"Voices?"

"No, sir."

"Have you been here all of the evening?"

"Since seven o'clock," said Greenleaf, bowing, and stroking his beard. "I came up immediately after dinner. I have been writing busily all the time. My work takes nearly all my time. I am very sorry I cannot aid you."

Nick thanked him and withdrew.

"He heard Darcy fall back on the bed," said he. "Now, Mr. Preston, we will question—one moment. Here comes my assistant."

Patsy had bounded up the near stairway and reappeared in the corridor. He hastened to join Nick, saying quietly:

"I've struck a clew, chief, all right."

"Yes?"

"The suite numbered seventy-nine was assigned to a man who arrived about four o'clock this afternoon. He insisted upon having a suite on the second floor, stating that he lived in constant dread of a hotel fire. It happened that seventy-nine was the only suite vacant on this floor."

"Did you get that information from the clerk?"

"Sure," said Patsy.

"What more?"

"The man registered as James Dexter, Covington, Kentucky, and said this was his first visit to New York. He was a compact, solid man, of medium height, and wore a full red beard. I showed this disguise to the clerk. He says it's a marker for Dexter's whiskers."

"The other adjoining suite, eh?" said Nick, whose mind had been working much more rapidly than was reflected in his face. "We'll inspect that suite, Preston, without delay."

"I will send for a pass-key."

"It's not necessary. I'll open the door with a pick-lock, an implement that knocks spots out of a pass-key. Did you inquire, Patsy, whether Dexter brought any luggage?"

"He had a sole-leather suit case and a heavy brown overcoat. Both were brought up to his room by one of the hallboys. He paid in advance."

"Very good. We shall find, I'll wager, that both he and his suit case are missing."

Nick was right.

The suite was deserted. It contained neither suit case nor overcoat. The window curtain had been drawn down, however, denoting that Dexter had been there after dark, and presumably had switched on the electric light.

The bed, however, had not been used.

The towels in the bathroom hung where the chambermaid had put them. Not one of them had been touched. The soap in a silver tray on the marble lavatory was perfectly dry. There was not a drop of water to be seen on the marble slab.

Nick mentally noted all of these points, but he made no comments.

He surprised Mr. Gideon Preston, however, by making a minute inspection of the top of the bureau and dressing stand, and afterward by crawling over the carpet near by and searching it with his electric lamp. Preston's surprise was even greater when Nick found and displayed what he was seeking.

It was a single hair about three inches long.

Nick placed it between two leaves of his notebook, where he finally inclosed it for safe-keeping.

"Notice its color against the white paper," said he. "It is dark red, perfectly matching the disguise. This speck on one end of it appears to be the root. It is not. It is a particle of glue. It is too hard and sharp for the root of a hair. I suspected that Dexter either combed or brushed his disguise while here, and the hairs drop readily from a false wig or beard."

"Really, Carter, you're a wonder," Preston declared. "Within half an hour after a murder is committed, you have learned the name and established the identity of the murderer."

"Oh, no, I haven't," Nick said dryly.

"But no sane man would now doubt that James Dexter was the murderer."

"You mean, Preston, the man who registered as James Dexter."

"You think the name is fictitious."

"Surely," said Nick. "All that I have learned, in reality, is that the man who murdered Darcy is the man who occupied this suite and registered as James Dexter."

"That's right, too, chief," put in Patsy.

"Who he is, where he came from, or where to look for him—well, I'm as deep in the dark as ever," Nick admitted. "But I'm not yet through with my inquiries. I will question your elevator men and the hallboys. While I am doing so, Patsy, you may ring up police headquarters and report the crime. State that I am investigating it, but want the police to take all of the other necessary steps."

CHAPTER III.

THE WOMAN IN GRAY.

Nick Carter, while Patsy Garvan hastened to follow the instructions given him, left the suite which Dexter had occupied, and returned to the elevator. He wanted to make a few more inquiries, not anticipating that he would evoke testimony that not only would greatly complicate the case, but also conflict seriously with several theories he already had formed—but made it a point not to mention.

The elevator was descending when Nick approached the grille cage, followed by Preston and the hallboy, but leaving Fallon to guard the door of the suite in which the murder had been committed.

Nick pressed the push button, at the same time quietly asking Preston:

"What is the man's name?"

"Hogan."

"Reliable?"

"Thoroughly. He has been here since the house was opened. He runs this elevator from two o'clock until midnight."

The lift dropped while Preston was speaking.

Hogan was the only occupant, a shrewd-looking young Irishman, wearing the livery of the house servants. His keen gray eyes dilated slightly when he saw Nick, who at once said, while Preston nodded approvingly:

"Hold the car here, Hogan. I want to ask you a few questions."

"Yes, sor. All right, Mr. Carter."

"Ah, you know me, then."

"I do, sor, by sight."

"I thought I detected it in your eyes," said Nick, smiling. "Fix your mind upon what occurred about half past eight, Hogan, and try to overlook nothing."

"Sure, that's not so long ago I'd be likely to forget. It's not yet nine, sor," said Hogan, with a look as if these inquiries were not unexpected.

"Were you carrying many passengers at that time?" asked Nick, noting his expression.

"I was not, sor. That's always a slack time."

"Did you have a passenger to, or from, this floor?"

"I did, sor. I had wan woman."

"Ah" said Nick, thinking of Rita Carvalli. "Was she some one you know by sight?"

"Faith, she was not. I didn't see her."

"Didn't see her?"

"I mane her face, av course," explained Hogan. "She was after wearing a big veil, the likes av those phat the women wear in the buzz wagons."

"I understand," smiled Nick. "She was a slender, graceful woman, clad in a dark-blue suit, wasn't she?"

"She was not," Hogan vouchsafed dryly.

"No?"

"She was a gray woman, sor, wid as foine a figure as ever I put me eyes on," Hogan added. "I mane, av course, that she had on a gray suit phat looked like broadcloth, wid a gray hat phat matched it, and wid a big gray veil tied over it and over her face. All I was after seeing, sor, was a bit of brown hair phat showed near her neck."

"H'm, is that so?" Nick murmured.

"But I've seen her before, sor," Hogan said quickly. "She's been after coming here every few days, not always in the gray suit, sor, but always wid her hat and face so close veiled that I couldn't see more than the glint of her eyes through the meshes. Mighty fine eyes they are, sor, too."

"She is not a guest of the house?"

"No, sor."

"Whom does she visit?"

"I don't know, sor. She is a bit av a mystery to me, Mr. Carter."

"Why so, Hogan?"

"Because she always comes in the evening, sor, about seven o'clock," explained Hogan. "She stays about an hour, or a bit more. It was exactly half past eight whin I took her down to-night."

"How do you fix the time so definitely?"

"By the cookoo clock in the main office, sor. I can hear the little boird whin he pops out to cookoo the hours and the halves. I heard him cookoo the half after eight just as I was letting the gray woman out av the car on the flure below. She wint the way she always goes, sor, round through the café corridor, and out of the ladies' entrance. But she always comes in this side door, sor, and up wid me in the illivator."

Preston stood listening intently, and without interrupting.

Nick Carter's brows were knitting perplexedly. The field was widening. Another suspect had turned up. Were there two women in the case, instead of only one?

"Did you bring her up this evening, Hogan?" Nick inquired.

"I did, sor."

"From which direction did she come when approaching the elevator to go down. Did you see her?"

"I did, sor. She came that way," said Hogan, pointing in the direction of the fatal apartments.

"Do you know from which suite she came?"

"I do not, Mr. Carter, but it was from wan of the near suites."

"Why do you think so?"

"Because, whin the lift was coming down from the flure next above this, I heard a door closed, and thin saw the gray woman coming to go down. I could see her through the grating."

"As she came toward the elevator."

"Yes, sor."

"She came from that direction, then," said Nick. "Would you say from the sound of the closed door, Hogan, that she came from the first, second, or third suite beyond the parlor, or from one still farther away?"

"Sure, sor, I couldn't say," replied Hogan, shaking his head. "I'm not that quick wid me ears."

"But if she had come from any suite on the opposite side of the corridor, Hogan, you could easily have seen her," said Nick. "The angle from the grating would let you see half a dozen doors on that side, fully as many as you could hear when closed."

"Faith, sor, that's right," Hogan quickly admitted. "She did not come from that side, sor, I'm dead sure. 'Twas from some suite on this side."

"Very good," said Nick.

"But, sor, that's not all," added Hogan. "Wan other queer thing happened whin she wint down."

"What was that, Hogan?"

"She was followed by a man. Leastwise, sor, that's how I look at it. But the strange part of it, sor, was the haste wid which he chased himself down the stairs, so as to reach the flure below and not lose sight of her. He was a good bit off color, sor, near as white as a piece of chalk, and wid a bad look in his eyes. I said to meself at the time, sor, that there was something wrong."

"Do you know where the man came from?"

"I don't."

"Or his name?"

"No, sor."

"Was he young, or old? Describe him."

"Faith, sor, he's a good looker. A fine-built man along about twenty-five, and he was well dressed. I'd say he might be a banker, or a lawyer, or——"

"A lawyer is just what he is."

The interruption came from one of several men who had appeared in the corridor, most of them having come up from the office.

Nick had observed them, and he knew that the crime had leaked out, for the number was steadily increasing, and many inquisitive eyes were turned toward the fatal suite.

Nick turned to the man who had spoken, and inquired:

"Are you acquainted with the man in question?"

"I am," was the reply. "His name is Harrison Floyd. He is a lawyer."

"Harry Floyd, eh?" said Nick, more puzzled. "I know him very well. How did you happen to observe him?"

"He passed me while I was coming through the café corridor. He was very pale, and looked a bit desperate, but I cannot say why. He rushed by me like a madman, in fact."

"I see," Nick nodded.

"He may have been after a woman in gray, who went out through the ladies' entrance half a minute before," added the stranger. "But that is only a guess on my part."

"Did you recognize the woman in gray?" Nick inquired.

"I did not. She was veiled."

"Do you know where Floyd went, or came from?"

"No, sir. I have told you all I know."

Nick saw that no additional information was to be obtained from either man, and he waved Hogan into the elevator.

"That's all," said he. "We now will go down to the office, Preston, and question the clerks."

Patsy had returned, and he quietly announced that he had notified police headquarters.

Two men among the many who had gathered near the scene, walked away and sought the main stairway leading down to the front entrance of the hotel. Both were dark and fairly well dressed, somewhat under thirty, but their faces were not attractive. That of one was particularly hard-featured and sinister.

"Do you know that gink, Piccone?" he asked, as they moved away.

"Which one, Tony?"

"The one doing the pumping."

"No. Do you?"

"Rather! He's a dick, the king pin of the alley."

"Not Nick Carter?" questioned Piccone, with eyes dilating.

"That's the mutt. He's got it all over the best of them, Piccone. He's one to stear clear of, or pack for a trip up the river. The first move I'd make, if I were to foul him, would be for my hip. I'd not give him time to put anything over on me."

"Croak him, eh?"

"Right off the reel."

"That would be the safe move, Garcia."

"The only move, Piccone," said the latter's companion, with a scowl. "'Twould be that, or up you'd go."

The speaker was Tony Garcia, known in gangland and by the police as Tony, the Tiger.

Nick Carter had not observed him. He was intent upon the widening field, and he was asking himself far more questions than he then could answer.

Who was this woman in gray?

Why was Harrison Floyd, a promising young lawyer, and a man of means and character, on her track in the manner and with the aspect described?

Did either, or both, know anything about the double crime committed that night?

Why was Rita Carvalli there, and how did she fit in?

Who was James Dexter, and where had he come from and gone?"

By whose hand, after all, in view of the conflicting circumstances, had John Darcy been slain?

These and many other questions were in the mind of Nick Carter.

CHAPTER IV.

NICK CARTER'S INSIGHT.

It was half past eight when the murder of John Darcy was discovered.

At eleven o'clock, after the immediate investigations he had made, Nick Carter was seated in the library of his residence in Madison Avenue. He had telephoned to the Orville House since arriving home, and had learned that the Ascotts, who had returned from the theater, had been robbed of jewelry valued at twelve thousand dollars, which Mrs. Ascott had concealed between the mattress and spring of their bed—thinking, womanlike, that it was as safe a place for it as the hotel vault.

Nick was reclining in a large armchair, with his heels on a footstool, and with a fragrant Havana cigar between his lips. His companions were Patsy Garvan and his senior assistant, Chick Carter, who then had been informed of the murder and the facts already set forth.

Laymen informed of them would have been hopelessly in the dark.

Most detectives would have been mystified, baffled by the conflicting circumstances, and all at sea as to what course would lead to a solution of the mystery and the identification and the arrest of the crook, or crooks, guilty of the double crime.

Nick Carter had been smoking in silence for several minutes when Chick, knocking the ashes from his cigar, said bluntly:

"It's a puzzle. I confess, Nick, that I am unable to dovetail all of the circumstances."

"You're not alone, too," put in Patsy. "It's a curious tangle."

"It appears perfectly plain, of course, that the man who registered as James Dexter committed the robbery and the murder, and that he obtained suite seventy-nine only because it adjoins that of the Ascotts, and was the most convenient point from which to get in his work," Chick added. "But what of the woman in gray, seen by Hogan? Who is she, and how does she fit into the case?

"What of Harry Floyd, who was seen bolting down the stairs and out of the house half a minute after the crime, as well as can be determined? Why was he in a rush, looking as white as a ghost, and with murder in his eyes, if the testimony of observers is trustworthy? I'll be hanged if I can put this jigsaw puzzle together consistently."

"Nor can I, chief," said Patsy. "There must be a good deal more to the case than has been discovered."

"You mean disclosed, Patsy," said Nick, a bit dryly.

"Disclosed?"

"Exactly."

"You must mean, then, that you have discovered something which you have not mentioned."

"Well, I have formed theories not yet mentioned," Nick admitted.

"Gee! That sounds more like it," Patsy declared. "Cut loose, chief, and explain. What do you mean?"

"I mean that I have gone back of the returns."

"Back of the returns?"

"In other words, Patsy, I have covered more ground than is embraced in the two crimes committed this evening," said Nick, more seriously. "It will take a little time to present my view of the case."

"Let's have it," said Chick. "We surely have nothing more important on the docket."

"That's right, too," supplemented Patsy. "What do you make of it, chief?"

Nick straightened up in his chair, and laid the end of his cigar in an ash tray. His strong, clean-cut face took on an intent expression characteristic of it when he entered into an argument, or a dissertation upon any serious subject. He glanced from one to the other and said:

"Let's begin, then, at the beginning."

"Beginning goes!" slipped in Patsy.

"And the beginning is Rita Carvalli, who came out of the side door of the house just about the time the murder was discovered," said Nick. "For Brown, the hallboy, found the body, and at once ran down and reported to the clerks and to Gideon Preston, who sent him out after Policeman Fallon. The whole business would not have required more than a couple of minutes, or the time it took us to walk around to the front of the house, Patsy, where we saw the hallboy rush out after Fallon. It's safe to say, then, that Rita Carvalli came out just when the crime was discovered. She was carefully veiled, and immediately hurried away."

"Right, chief, as far as you've gone," said Patsy.

"Now, as I have said, let's go back of the returns," Nick continued. "What do we know about Rita Carvalli?"

"Nothing good."

"Nothing good, Patsy, is correct," said Nick. "She is a product of Little Italy and the East Side. Her father, now dead, was an Italian fruit vender, with a little shop on the Bowery, near Stanton Street. She grew up like a weed, but a weed of extraordinary loveliness. Her beauty was observed by an uptown artist, and at sixteen she became his model. He introduced her to bohemia and a higher grade of associates than she had ever known. She met men of wealth, and they lavished money upon her. She soon discovered that she need not work for a living. She caught on quickly, and she is now as crafty, heartless, and treacherous a leech as could be found in New York City."

"That's saying a good deal, chief," said Patsy, with a laugh.

"It is true, nevertheless."

"True as Gospel," Chick agreed. "She's certainly a bad egg. It was she who sent Phil Langham to the dogs, and made him a murderer, as clean-cut and promising a chap as ever stood in leather, until his father died, and he lost his head for this girl."

"She was not entirely to blame," Nick replied. "I was well acquainted with Geoffrey Langham, the young man's father. He left about five millions to his two children, Phil and Luella Langham.

"The money set Phil going. Between wine, women, and cards, he cut a wide swath for a couple of years, until the shooting of Tomaso Carvalli caused him to bolt for parts unknown. The truth has never been told, in my opinion, but it will come out some day. It is said, by the way, that Gideon Preston now wants to marry Luella Langham, and that he is quite favorably regarded."

"Gee! She cannot be wise, in that case, to his friendliness with Rita Carvalli," put in Patsy. "She would not stand for that, chief, after what the moll did to her brother."

"But I have heard that she's as good as engaged to Harry Floyd, the lawyer," said Chick. "That's common talk, and appears more probable, for Floyd is much more of a man than Gid Preston. Gid is smooth, slick, and prosperous, all right, but under the surface he has always been a rounder. Money is his idol, and he more likely is after Miss Langham's fortune. But it strikes me, Nick, that we have strayed from the subject. Come to Hecuba. How do you size up the murder of Darcy?"

"I think it was committed by some man employed in the house."

"The hotel?"

"Yes."

"Why do you think so?"

"For several reasons," said Nick. "To begin with, Chick, the Ascotts arrived about two weeks ago. They since have occupied suite seventy-eight. The murder was committed by a thief caught in the apartment by Darcy, and who had made it a point to secure the adjoining suite. He insisted upon having one on that floor, on which only number seventy-nine then was unoccupied."

"How could Dexter have known that?"

"That's the very point," said Nick. "A stranger from Covington, Kentucky, could not have known it. He was not a stranger, in fact, and he knew the suite to be vacant. He got it assigned to him by pretending that he feared to room higher up. He registered from Kentucky, moreover, where the Ascotts reside, only to cause the police to infer that he followed them here for the purpose of robbery."

"There may be something in that," Chick allowed.

"Other like robberies have been committed in that house," Nick continued. "There has been at least a dozen within a year, and in every case a quantity of valuable jewelry was secured, always from guests who were not in the habit of putting it in the hotel safe. That fact could not have been easily learned, Chick, except by a person employed in the house."

"By Jove, that's true, Nick."

"Not only employed there," Nick added; "but also in a position enabling him not only to learn what guests kept valuable jewelry in their rooms, but also what other rooms were unoccupied, and to obtain one in the same corridor. For all of these robberies were ascribed, not to a sneak thief who stole in from the street, but to some unknown man who registered and occupied apartments quite near those of his victims."

"As in this case."

"Exactly."

"The necessary information could be most easily obtained by some one employed in the hotel office," Chick suggested.

"True," said Nick. "There's another point warranting that suspicion. One of the clerks, or even the manager himself, could register a fictitious name and assign a desired suite to the supposed guest, designing to afterward occupy it in disguise for the purpose of robbery."

"Gee whiz! that listens good to me, chief," cried Patsy. "All of these robberies were very much alike. That shows they may have been the work of the same man. There's a crook in the Orville House, a wolf within, as sure as I'm a foot high."

"One other bit of evidence points very strongly to that, Patsy," said Nick.

"Namely?"

"The disguise concealed under one corner of a blanket thrown over the foot of the bed."

"What do you deduce from that?" Chick inquired.

"Simply that Dexter, the crook, was able to deceive Darcy."

"Deceive him?"

"In order to get the best of him," Nick explained. "Darcy was not a man to be caught hands down unless by trickery."

"That's true."

"Picture the scene," Nick added. "Dexter had forced open the desk, ransacked the bureau drawers, and stripped the bed, in his search for the Ascott jewels. He had just found them, probably, when he heard Darcy entering. The detective has a pass-key to every suite. Obviously, the moment he entered, he must have seen that a robbery was in progress."

"Certainly," Chick agreed. "Also that he was confronting the robber."

"Ordinarily, yes," said Nick. "But not in this case. Otherwise, there would have been a struggle, or a murder committed near the corridor door, for the crook would have floored Darcy the instant he entered."

"Naturally."

"Instead, there was no great struggle, Chick, and Dercy was killed in the alcove and near the bed, fully fifteen feet from the door through which he had entered. What is the only consistent inference?"

"You say?"

"Simply this—that Darcy, instead of finding an unknown crook in the suite, found himself confronted by some man connected with the house, one supposed to have a right to be there, and who was able to deceive Darcy with some plausible story until he could suddenly seize him by the throat and stab him."

"You think, then, that Dexter removed the disguise and concealed it when he heard Darcy entering."

"Exactly. He thrust it under a corner of the blanket."

"But why did he leave it there when he fled? He could have taken it with him."

"He intended to do so. He thought that he did so."

"How do you figure that out?"

"Because only part of the disguise was left," said Nick. "Dexter must, of course, have worn a wig that matched the beard and mustache. He also must have removed the whole business and slipped it out of sight under the blanket. In his haste to make a quick get-away, however, he evidently seized the wig and thrust it into his pocket, supposing that he also had the beard and mustache. Otherwise, assuming that the disguise was not inadvertently left there, the wig also would have been found."

"I see the point."

"That he fled in great haste, moreover, appears in that he did not wait to wash his hands. He could not have stabbed Darcy twice without getting them covered with blood."

"Surely not."

"Now, note these points," said Nick earnestly. "He did not use the lavatory in the Ascott suite, nor in the adjoining one assigned to Dexter. The towels and soap in both were perfectly dry. That could not have been the case if he had used them, for I was in both rooms within twenty minutes after the crime was committed. There would have been evidence of it, if the articles had been used. Now, here's the point—would Dexter have returned to his suite, and not have cleansed his hands?"

"That seems quite improbable," said Chick.

"Utterly improbable," Nick forcibly argued. "The only inference is, Chick, that he did not return, but went to some other room to which he had access. For he certainly would not have left the house with his hands covered with blood."

"True."

"Nevertheless, when we searched his suite a few minutes later, his suit case and overcoat were gone," Nick further pointed out. "They were not removed after the murder. No person could have gone to that suite and got away without being seen. Plainly enough, then, Dexter must have removed them before committing the two crimes."

"By Jove, there is no getting around that, Nick," said Chick, more deeply impressed. "You must be hitting close to the mark."

"The bull's-eye itself," cried Patsy, elated. "Gee! that's dead open and shut."

"Let's go a step farther," Nick proceeded.

"Keep up the good work, chief," Patsy impulsively added. "More power to you."

"All this tends to confirm what I asserted in the beginning—that the crime was committed by some one employed in the house."

"It does so, Nick."

"Now, note this point," said Nick. "If Darcy was deceived in the manner described, which appears most probable, the deception could have been accomplished, and Darcy stood off for a few moments, or until he could be successfully jabbed with a knife—it could have been accomplished only by some man having authority in the hotel. Darcy would have nailed a subordinate on the instant."

"Great Scott!" Chick exclaimed. "You evidently are looking as high as Preston himself."

Nick laughed a bit grimly.

"I'm looking at all of the evidence and circumstances," he replied. "Rita Carvalli is very intimate with Gid Preston. We know that she left the house directly after the murder was committed, for the body still was warm when I examined it. What was she doing in the house at just that time? Why did she slip out of the side door, closely veiled, and hurry away?"

"That's right, too, chief."

"I don't say that she is in league with Preston, nor that I know Preston to be the guilty man. But I do say that the circumstances are irresistibly significant, particularly so in view of the fact that the weapon used is an old Italian dagger."

"All are significant, Nick, surely."

"Furthermore," Nick forcibly argued; "who so easily as Preston could have bluffed Darcy, obtained access to the Ascott suite, as well as the one the crook occupied, or so easily have accomplished all that was done, and then found speedy shelter in other apartments, quite likely his own. No one, not even Darcy, would have thought of suspecting him, much less opposing him, had he been seen passing through the corridor."

"All that is true, Nick, much too true to be denied," Chick admitted. "But how could he have fooled Darcy? What kind of a story could he have put up in explanation of his presence in the Ascott suite?"

"One with which he probably was provided in event of any such emergency," said Nick. "He could have asserted that he heard some one in the suite, yet knew the Ascotts to be absent. He could have said that he entered to find out who was there, and that he had discovered the evidence of robbery, and was making a hurried investigation. Surprised at seeing him there, Darcy would have fallen for that, and Preston could easily have lured him toward the bed to show him what he had discovered, and then seized an opportunity to quickly throttle and stab him."

"By Jove, that's very plausible," Chick thoughtfully admitted. "It may be that Preston has been playing this sort of a game for the past year. I have heard that he has dropped more money in Wall Street than he has made in the Orville House. You might be right, Nick, from beginning to end."

"It looks right to me," Nick replied.

"And to me, chief," put in Patsy.

"Looks, however, are not sufficient," Nick quickly added. "We must have positive evidence. Without it, no one would believe Preston guilty of such knavery. We must dig deeper before we can deliver the goods."

"But when did you first wise up in this way?"

"I was not without some of these suspicions before leaving the house," Nick replied. "It would have been folly, however, to have revealed them and undertaken to corner Preston. He is not the type of man to have done such a job without guarding himself against being cornered. We've got to get absolute evidence without letting him think we suspect him. That may not be easily done. There is, too, one other remote possibility."

"That he, after all, is not the guilty man?"

"Exactly. Some other person in authority may be the crook."

"Gee! it's Preston for mine," cried Patsy. "Too many circumstances point in his direction for me to look elsewhere."

"There is some truth in that, Patsy.

"But who the dickens, then, is the woman in gray?" Chick questioned perplexedly "Why was she there? Why has she been stealthily visiting the house? From what suite did she come at just about the time of the murder? What was wrong, moreover, with Harry Floyd? Why was he bolting from the immediate scene of the crime? How are we to answer those questions?"

"Further investigation, Chick, may bring forth the correct answers," Nick replied. "I'm not going to undertake at this stage of the game to explain all of the circumstances. I'm not given to biting off more than I can chew. We'll be content, at present, to tackle the case in some way consistent with our suspicions."

"What are your plans?"

"I have not definitely decided," said Nick, glancing at a French clock on the mantel. "I shall have decided by tomorrow morning, however, when I think there will be work enough to keep us all busy. No more can be done till then, in fact, for it is after midnight. Go to bed and sleep on it."

CHAPTER V.

THE MISSING LEAVES.

Nick Carter was prepared the following morning to tackle the case, as he had predicted, but he did not fall over himself in his haste to do so.

"The blackbirds to be baked in the pie I am making are not early risers," he remarked to Chick and Patsy, while at breakfast. "They fly late, and rise late. We are much less likely to incur suspicion and put them on their guard, moreover, if we don't sally out too early with a gun. Midday, or even later, will be the best."

"But what's your scheme?" Chick inquired.

"We must get after two persons, to begin with, and contrive to find out what they were doing in the Orville House last night, also why they were doing it," said Nick. "It must be accomplished without alarming them, moreover, and that best may be done, perhaps, by stealthily watching them to see what they do to-day."

"On the theory, chief, that what occurred and what they did last night will necessitate some significant move to-day," put in Patsy.

"Exactly," said Nick. "I refer to Harry Floyd and Rita Carvalli."

"I supposed so," said Chick.

"Neither has, so far as I know, any reason to feel apprehensive of suspicion. Their names are not mentioned in the newspaper stories of the crime. I have looked them all over this morning. Both probably feel, therefore, that they were not seen last evening, or, at least, not regarded with suspicion. They may, then, feel safe in making any necessary move."

"Reasonably safe, Nick, at least," Chick agreed.

"You may tackle Floyd, Chick, while Patsy gets after Rita Carvalli," Nick directed. "You may be governed by circumstances, or by what you may learn. In the meantime, I am going to the Orville House, and have a talk with Preston. I think I can find out whether he, or some other man, is guilty of the several robberies committed there during the past year."

"By what means, Nick?"

"The hotel register. The crook in every case, whoever he was, registered the fictitious name of the character he assumed in order to secure a room. I defy any man to write his name twice, say nothing of half a dozen times, so differently that I cannot detect and identify the writing as his own. After seeing a specimen of Preston's writing, I can soon tell whether his hand wrote one or all of the crook signatures."

"By Jove, that would settle it," said Chick. "It's a good scheme."

"We shall see," said Nick simply.

It then was nearly nine o'clock, and most of the morning was occupied by all three detectives over their mail, the newspapers, and the dictation of necessary letters. It was close upon noon when they left the house, each on the mission mentioned.

Half an hour later, Nick sauntered into the Orville House office, always filled with an animated throng at that time, and approached the clerks' inclosure. Beyond it was the private office of the manager, and, before Nick could question either of the three clerks then on duty, he heard Preston call him by name.

"This way, Carter. Come round to my office."

Nick nodded and complied, entering from a side corri-

dor. He found Preston alone, immaculately clad, and looking as fresh as if just from a bath and the hands of a valet. If he felt any personal apprehensions because of the crimes committed the previous night, he in no way betrayed it.

"You are tardy, Carter," he said affably, placing a chair, and tendering a box of cigars to his visitor. "Have a smoke. I have been expecting you all the morning."

"Expecting me?" queried Nick, with brows lifted.

"Certainly."

"Why so?"

"Because I thought you would continue your work on this deplorable case. I hope you'll consent to do so."

"I shall," said Nick tersely.

"Good! I feared you were leaving it to the detective bureau at police headquarters."

"No. Darcy was an old friend of mine, Preston, and I'm out to get the man who killed him. I shall get him, too, as sure as there's juice in a lemon."

"Speed the day," Preston fervently exclaimed. "Now, Carter, tell me what you make of the case. It's a relief to talk with a man of your perception and judgment. I've been driven half wild by reporters, policemen, and plain-clothes men this morning, not one of whom appeared to know where he was at. What do you know of the dreadful affair?"

"It's a perfectly simple problem," said Nick.

"Simple?"

"As twice two."

"Explain. I don't get you. It looks damnably dark to me," Preston declared, regarding the detective more sharply. "Simple, eh? What do you mean?"

"Just what I say," replied Nick. "The circumstances admit of only one interpretation. Darcy suspected that some one was in the Ascott suite. He knew they were absent. He entered to find out who was there. He was seen by a burglar, then probably concealed by the alcove curtains, who throttled and killed Darcy before he could utter a cry, or put up a fight. That's the case, Preston, in a nutshell."

"That's what you call simple, eh?"

"Certainly."

"But are you going to stop there?" Preston demanded, laughing a bit derisively. "Is there nothing more to it? How are the stolen jewels to be recovered? How is the reputation of this house to be reëstablished? How is Dexter, or whatever his true name may be, to be identified, traced, and arrested?"

"Ah!" said Nick. "That's quite another matter."

"I should say so. Simple, indeed!"

"I hope to make a beginning, however, in a very few moments," Nick added, a bit dryly.

"You do?"

"That's why I am here."

"Well, well, that's more encouraging," said Preston, with manifest satisfaction. "How make a beginning, Carter? Can I aid you?"

"Yes. I wish to inspect the hotel register."

"Certainly." Preston sprang up to get it, but turned and abruptly added, with a look of intense perplexity: "By the way, a most extraordinary thing has occurred to the register. It must have some bearing on the case."

"What has occurred to it?"

"One of the leaves has been cut out."

"Cut out, eh?"

"Yes."

"A recent leaf?"

"One in use yesterday."

"The one which contained the signature inscribed by James Dexter?"

"Yes," replied Preston, steadily meeting Nick's gaze. "But who did it, or why, or when it was done, is more than I can conjecture. What do you think about it? Wait one moment, Carter, and I'll bring the register. You shall see for yourself."

Nick nodded without a change of countenance, and waited. He needed no one to tell him that the criminal, whoever he was, had anticipated his peril and destroyed the evidence that might have convicted him. It further convinced Nick that the crook was in the house, but this man Preston did not appear to have even thought of that, and to be absolutely void of apprehensions.

He returned after a moment, and placed the open register on his desk.

"See for yourself, Carter," he repeated. "I'm blessed if I can fathom it."

Nick examined the register before replying. He found that the leaf had been cut out close to the binding, evidently with a sharp knife. He expressed none of his feelings over the matter, but replied inquiringly, resuming his seat:

"Hasn't it occurred to you, Preston, that Dexter might have been traced by his writing?"

Preston looked surprised, then his countenance lighted.

"No, I had not thought of that," he declared. "By Jove, that may explain it, Carter, after all."

"I think so."

"After getting away, then, Dexter must have returned and contrived to remove the leaf without being seen by the clerks."

"Could that have been done?"

"It must have been done. The leaf is missing."

"Are you sure of your clerks, Preston?"

"Sure of them?"

"That they are strictly honest?"

"You can bet I am, Carter, or they would not be here," Preston pointedly asserted. "I pick my men very carefully. Don't get an idea that any one in my office would have done such a job, or is capable of crime. That would be absurd, Carter, utterly absurd. It must be that Dexter, returning in another disguise after the murder, or with no disguise, contrived to steal the leaf undetected. No other theory is tenable."

"Possibly not," Nick allowed. "There have been other robberies committed here under like circumstances, I believe."

"Yes. I have tried in vain to prevent them, and to round up the crooks, as I told you last evening."

"Can you tell just when they occurred?"

"Easily."

"Have you examined the registers in use at those times?"

"No, I have not. That has not occurred to me."

"Let's do so," said Nick. "Look up the dates of the previous robberies, and let's see the registers. You know the names of the suspected crooks, of course. I want to see their signatures."

Preston hastened to obey, apparently eager to exhibit the desired evidence—but he did not succeed in doing so.

In every case—a leaf of the register had been cut out and removed.

Preston appeared amazed, and the clerks astounded.

Nick Carter expressed no opinion. He merely remarked to Preston, when about to leave:

"There has been a slick crook at work here occasionally, Preston. He has anticipated his peril, in so far as his signature might serve to expose him. Most of those leaves were probably cut out some little time after each crime, that the fact might not be observed by you, or your clerks. The circumstances of last night, with the unexpected killing of Darcy, necessitated the immediate destruction of the missing leaf. He has balked my first move to trace him, Preston, but I shall in some way pick up his trail. Take my word for that, Preston. I will see you later."

"Make it to-morrow, Carter, unless you intend calling during this afternoon," Preston coolly requested. "I have an important engagement this evening."

"It may not be for a week, possibly two," Nick replied. "It will not be, in fact, until I have occasion to seek further evidence here—or have something to report."

"The sooner the better, Carter, in either case," Preston asserted, with a smile, and extended his hand.

Nick shook it and departed—but he did not go far.

Ten minutes later he returned in disguise. He took a seat in one corner of the spacious office, where, from around a newspaper he could keep an eye on Preston's private office.

One probability was obvious to Nick, one that occasioned the course he was taking, as well as the steps required of his two assistants—a probability that exceedingly strained relations of some kind, possibly of a threatening and dangerous nature, must have resulted from the unexpectedly committed murder, and the precipitous flight of the several persons seemingly involved, a flight and separation that had precluded any immediate communication and understanding between them.

Nick reasoned that they would, therefore, as soon as it was felt to be safe to do so, and, in order to avert further impending disaster, naturally seek to come to some kind of an understanding, and to arrive at a speedy readjustment of the matters involving them. He felt comparatively sure that it would be attempted before another day had passed, though probably not before the darkness of evening would serve to hide them.

It was upon this shrewd theory that Nick had started Chick and Patsy on the trail of Floyd and Rita Carvalli, and why he returned to keep an eye on the movements of Gideon Preston.

The minutes lengthened into hours, but Nick's patience was unruffled. He had expected a long vigil, and he was taking no chance of an earlier move, and of losing sight of his man.

Six o'clock came, and Preston emerged from the hotel café, where he had dined, and went up to his room.

Nick saw that he did not take the elevator, and he contrived to stealthily follow him. He then discovered that Preston's apartments were on the second floor, adjoining a corridor diverging from that in which the murder had been committed. Nick also discovered that there was a rear stairway leading down to the kitchen, and a passageway to the main office.

"By Jove, the net tightens," he said to himself. "It would have been dead easy for him to have left the Ascott suite after the murder, and to have reached his own rooms undetected. He also could have transferred the suit case and overcoat before the crime, that it might appear that Dexter had fled with his luggage.

"It would have been equally easy for him to quickly have cleansed his hands, changed his garments, and slipped down the back stairway to the hotel office, where I saw him within six or eight minutes after the murder. It would have been easy and simple, all right, and that alone warrants further assurance that I am on the right track. Others are eliminated by the mere fact that he could have accomplished the whole business so easily."

Preston remained in his room about half an hour. He emerged in evening dress and left the house by the side door, the same through which Rita Carvalli had fled the previous night.

Nick watched him from a stairway, and stealthily followed him.

"If he takes a taxi, I'll trail him in another," he said to himself.

Preston did not take a cab. He went on foot to a subway station, and boarded a train—with Nick Carter after him.

"He must have some reason for not taking a cab," thought the detective. "He may not want his destination known by others. He fears, perhaps, that there may come a time when a chauffeur could expose him. One often can travel on foot and by subway unrecognized. I'll make sure, by Jove, that I don't lose sight of him."

It was seven o'clock when Gideon Preston arrived at his destination. It proved to be a costly stone residence in a side street leading from Riverside Drive, a handsome dwelling occupying a site somewhat higher than and back from the street, with attractive surrounding grounds of moderate extent, and abutting on others of like character.

Preston mounted a long rise of marble steps, flanked on each side with a terraced lawn. He rang the bell and was admitted by the house butler.

Nick Carter knew the place.

"The Langham residence," he muttered, while pausing to watch his quarry. "He is here to call on Luella Langham. She comprises the entire family, barring her recreant brother. Is it possible that she figures in this case? Hardly—hardly!

"She is a woman of unquestionable character. She is utterly incapable of deliberate evil, or of even conniving at any kind of knavery. She would not—wait! By gracious, that might be! The woman in gray!"

Nick had moved on to get a look at the opposite side of the house. He had passed it, and was turning to gaze toward its lighted windows.

Then, suddenly, a low peculiar whistle fell upon his ears.

"Ah, by Jove, there's something doing," thought Nick, a bit startled. "That whistle came from Patsy."

CHAPTER VI.

THE MAN IN DISGUISE.

Nick Carter was right—the signal came from Patsy Garvan.

Through the gloom, back of a low wall dividing the Langham estate from that adjoining it, a crouching figure was approaching him, so stealthily that Nick at once took the cue and also stepped in from the street and dropped back of the wall.

In another moment they were side by side, Patsy chuckling softly, and wearing a very expressive grin.

"Gee! the game has broken cover, chief, for fair, or you would not be here," he whispered. "Was that Preston who entered the house?"

"Yes."

"It's the Langham residence."

"I know it," murmured Nick. "But what brought you here?"

"Who, is the proper pronoun," chuckled Patsy. "Rita Carvalli."

"Is she in the house?"

"No—behind it."

"Ah! Spying, eh?"

"That's what," said Patsy, with eyes glittering in the darkness. "I can report in a nutshell. She has a flat in Park Avenue, you know. She keeps one servant. I learned at noon, when I went nosing around there, that she had just got up, and was having her breakfast. I got that from a grocer's boy who delivered some provisions."

"She has made no move this morning, then," put in Nick.

"Not a move, chief, and she did not leave her flat until nearly six," said Patsy. "Then she came straight out here. She watched the house from the street for a time, but finally she stole around back of it, where she has been watching the rear windows, and—ah, there she is now! Have a look."

Nick peered cautiously over the top of the wall.

A lithe figure, clad all in black, was stealing by the side steps of the house, and seeking a point under the lace-draped windows of a brightly lighted library. She was hardly visible in the surrounding gloom—a slender, sinuous, crouching figure, darker than the darkness.

Nick watched her briefly, until he saw her stop and crouch below one of the lighted windows. He then turned to Patsy and whispered:

"There is even more in the wind to-night than I have anticipated. Don't lose sight of the jade. Shadow her, in case she leaves before I return, and don't drop her until you discover her game, and what she has up her sleeve. I'm going around to an opposite window."

Patsy merely nodded.

Nick crept from his concealment, stole across the street, and presently approached a window in the opposite side of the house, one through which he could, by looking through an unlighted parlor, and across the adjoining hall, view the library and its occupants.

Gideon Preston was seated near a table in the middle of the finely furnished room. He was talking earnestly with a fair, strikingly handsome woman in the twenties, whose superb figure was clad in a rich evening gown, enhancing her almost classical beauty.

"Miss Langham, as I expected," mused Nick, who could plainly see both faces. "But what is Preston handing her, that he wears so ominous an expression, and why is she so pale? By Jove, this looks like coercion. H'm, let's see—let's see!"

Nick fell to reviewing all of the circumstances, at the same time intently watching the couple. He was an expert reader of faces. He noted every changing expression of both, every significant gesture, and how ghastly white the woman was growing. He never had seen, in fact, a look of more poignant suffering on a woman's face.

Ten minutes passed.

Nick Carter's eyes had taken on an ominous gleam and glitter. He crept out to the street, rejoined Patsy, and repeated the instructions already given him, and he then hastened away.

Twenty minutes later, divested of his disguise, Nick entered the side door of the Orville House and mounted the stairs. He glanced at the door of the suite in which Darcy had met his fate, then deserted and in darkness. He glanced at that door, thinking of Darcy—but he quickly stepped, instead, to the door of the adjoining suite, No. 77.

He paused for a moment, listened, and then he knocked.

Half a minute passed before the door was opened—by the elderly gentleman questioned the previous night.

"Ah," Nick said blandly. "I am fortunate, Mr. Greenleaf, in finding you here. I hope you can spare time from your literary work to answer a few questions for me. I need a little information which I think you can impart."

"Dear me! I did not recognize you at first," said Mr. Greenleaf, stepping back for Nick to enter. "You're the detective who called with Mr. Preston last evening."

"Yes, the same."

"Come in and have a chair. Information—dear me, I don't know how I can aid you."

"I will presently explain. I hope you are not too busy."

"No, no, not more so than usual," said Greenleaf, resuming the seat at his manuscript-covered table, Nick having taken a chair directly opposite. "I am always busy in the evening. I find that my best time for work Mr.——"

"Carter," said Nick. "My name is Nick Carter."

"Ah, yes! I have read about you in connection with the terrible crime last evening. It was dreadful—dreadful! I since have found it hard to compose myself for my work. Poor Mr. Darcy! I had a speaking acquaintance with him."

"Are you writing a novel, Mr. Greenleaf, or——"

"Oh, no!" Greenleaf smiled faintly and shook his head. "I am an Englishman, and have been traveling in this country. I came to New York about a month ago. I am studying social and political conditions here. My work is, in effect, a comparison of English and American life, with my personal views on the subject. I shall remain here about a week longer, and then return to my home in London."

"I see," said Nick, nodding at him across the table. "That sound very plausible."

"Plausible?"

Greenleaf's eyes took on a sharper gleam through his black-rimmed glasses.

"Plausible—yes," said Nick. "But it is not true."

"Not true! What do you mean——"

"Oh, don't get excited," Nick blandly interrupted. "I will explain. No writer of books, Mr. Greenleaf, ever used this kind of paper—nor wears a disguise!"

Nick, reaching first to the manuscript on the table, and then quickly to the gray beard of his hearer, gave the beard a very violent jerk.

It came off in his hand, displacing the wig of the wearer and revealing the strong, smoothly shaved face of a handsome man in the twenties.

"Ah, I thought so!" Nick quickly exclaimed. "Phil Langham!"

The trick was turned in the hundredth part of a second, so quickly that Langham was utterly dumfounded for the moment.

Then he uttered a groan, a half-smothered oath, and, like a flash, reached to the table drawer.

Nick Carter's hands shot across the table and seized both wrists of the young man in a viselike grip.

"None of that, Phil," he cried, with suppressed feelings. "Don't reach for a gun. I'm not here as your foe, but your friend."

"Friend——"

"I don't want you for the Carvalli murder. I want, instead, to help you find the assassin. I don't believe, nor have I ever believed, that you did it."

"Good God!" Langham sank back in his chair, staring at the detective's earnest face. "That from you—from Nick Carter! Can it be, then, that there's a rift in the clouds?"

"You bet there is, Phil," Nick said, less forcibly. "Pull yourself together, now, and hear what I have to say. I did not suspect your identity until a short time ago. I've been to your home, spying outside, and I have seen Gideon Preston trying, unless I was much mistaken, to coerce your sister into marrying him by threatening to expose you unless she consents. He has in some way discovered your identity."

"Preston—I'm lost, then! I——"

"Not by a long chalk," Nick interrupted. "You're nearer safety, Langham, than at any moment since Tomaso Carvalli was shot."

"God hearing me, Carter, I never killed that man!"

"I believe you. I not only believe you, but I'm going to prove your innocence," said Nick, now releasing him. "Sit quiet, now, and consider me in your service. If we can not jointly dig up the truth—take it from me, Langham, I'll throw up my vocation."

Langham gazed at him for a moment, with twitching lips, and eyes flooding, and then came the natural reaction from a constant strain of twelve long months. He seemed to suddenly realize the full significance of what Nick Carter had been saying to him. He covered his face with his hands and gave way to convulsive sobs and tears.

Nick waited until his emotions began to subside, and he then said kindly:

"Now, Phil, pull yourself together. Time may be of value. I knew your father well, and I know your sister to be as fine a woman as ever stood in leather. I know that you, too, are all right—barring a year or two of youthful folly and indiscretion. You have paid the price ten times over."

"I have, indeed! God knows it," said Langham, striving to calm himself.

"But there are better days coming," said Nick. "I'm going to ferret out the truth and set you right."

"I must be dreaming. I can hardly believe it—hardly believe it! That you, Nick Carter, are siding with me. Thundering guns! the tide must have turned!" Langham forcibly added, with a sudden outburst of manly strength.

"You bet it has turned," Nick declared, with a nod of approval. "Now, Phil, compose yourself. I want you to tell me just what you know about the Carvalli murder. I know all about your friendliness with Rita Carvalli, and where the crime was committed. But have you any idea who did the shooting?"

"I suspect that Tony Garcia did it."

"Tony, the Tiger, eh?"

"Yes. But I have not one atom of proof."

"Tell me about it."

"All of the circumstances seem to point to me," Langham proceeded. "I knew that Garcia and his gang were ready to swear that I did it. That's why I fled. I could see my finish unless I bolted. I fled with the hope of returning in disguise, as I have done, and by my own efforts finding out the truth. I have been watching Garcia and his gang night after night for the past month, wearing a different disguise at times, and trying to pick up evidence that would help me. All this stuff," added Langham, pointing to the pile of manuscript; "is only a blind to cover my presence here."

"A very good one, too, ordinarily," said Nick, with a smile. "Have you met with any success?"

"Not the slightest."

"I'll undertake it for you. Tell me about the shooting."

"That can be told with a breath," said Langham. "I was with Rita Carvalli in Coster's Hotel, in Rivington Street, that evening."

"I know the place."

"I had been gambling, and had met her there for dinner. We were leaving about eight o'clock in the evening. She was putting on her wraps, and I was coming down a stairway leading from our private dining room."

"I follow you."

"When about halfway down, Tomaso Carvalli entered from the street. He had blood in his eye. I saw that plainly, for I knew he bitterly resented my relations with his sister."

"I understand."

"I saw that he meant mischief, and I ran down the stairs to expostulate with him. Then a shot was fired, and the bullet crashed into Carvalli's head. He fell dead at my feet," Langham cried, with a shudder. "I don't know who fired the shot. I was too excited to determine from what direction it came. I know only that Garcia and four of his gang suddenly appeared on the stairs and in the entry below, and I saw that they were out to get me."

"I see," said Nick.

"I knew their game, too. I knew that they were going to fix the murder upon me. I obeyed my first impulse, therefore. I floored two of them and got away—and I've been away, Nick, until a month ago, when I ventured here in this disguise, and with the design I have stated."

"Very good," said Nick. "I had a superficial knowledge of the case before coming here. That's all of importance that you can tell me?"

"Yes."

"Who were with Tony Garcia that night? Do you know them by name?"

"Yes."

"Who?"

"Frank Derosa, Tom Picconi, Jasper Meagle, and a fellow called Gil Hart."

"His name is Gilman Hart," said Nick. "I know all of them by sight and reputation. They're a bad bunch."

"And well I know it," said Langham bitterly.

"Do you know any reason why Tony Garcia wanted Carvalli out of the way?" Nick inquired.

"Yes, I think so."

"What?"

"I know that Garcia was in love with Rita, and that Carvalli, who knew Garcia to be a crook, swore to knife him unless he quit his attentions to her. I think Garcia wanted both Carvalli and me out of his way, and he took that means of removing us."

"I guess you're right," said Nick. "It will be necessary, however, to prove it. I'm going to undertake it. Now, Phil, about one other matter."

"I'll confess everything, Carter, to you," Langham said gratefully.

"Your sister has been coming here to see you, hasn't she?"

"Yes, by stealth."

"That was necessary, Phil, under the circumstances."

"So we both thought," nodded Langham. "She has been here quite frequently, both to talk with me, and to provide me with money."

"She was here last evening."

"Yes."

"She left about half past eight."

"Yes."

"Clad in a gray suit."

"She was."

Nick laughed and rubbed his hands.

"Remove the rest of that disguise, Phil, and get ready to go with me," he said abruptly.

"With you—where?"

"To your home."

"My—my home?" gasped Langham, staring.

"Yes. I want to make sure I am right."

"But—but not without my disguise," said Langham fearfully. "I may be seen—arrested——"

"You'll not be arrested unless it's done over my dead body," Nick interrupted, laughing. "You do what I direct, Phil, and you'll never regret it. I'm going to pull you out of the fire."

CHAPTER VII.

OUT FOR VENGEANCE.

Patsy Garvan's vigil from behind a wall was not of long duration after the departure of Nick Carter for the Orville House.

Less than half an hour had passed, when Gideon Preston left the Langham residence, and half a minute later Patsy saw Rita Carvalli steal out to the street and hasten away.

He followed her to a subway station, boarded the same car, and then obtained his first good look at her face.

It was as colorless as chalk. Her black eyes were like pools of liquid fire. Her lips were gray and drawn.

She looked like a girl whose heart had been cut in twain, in whom all that was good had forever expired, and given place to all that is devilish.

"Gee!" Patsy mentally exclaimed, after briefly watching her. "What she overheard has loosed the tiger in her. She looks fit to stab her own mother. Nick was right, for fair, and I'll not lose sight of this jade."

Patsy shadowed her to a house in Forsyth Street, and before she had arrived there he knew where she was heading, that she was going back to the gang. He saw her enter, dart up the narrow wooden steps, and throw open the door.

Seeing no light in the front of the house, but the reflection of one in the rear, Patsy bolted through an alley and over a fence in time to reach a back basement window, overlooking a miserable, soggy backyard, just as the girl came down the stairs to enter the room.

It contained four men, who were seated around a table playing cards. All were of a type common enough in that locality, dark-featured fellows, with the ruffled brows and sinister eyes of the gangster.

One was better dressed than the others, but more vicious-looking. He was a smooth-shaved, sallow, black-eyed man of twenty-five, and he was gazing with a frown toward the open door leading into a gloomy entry, when Patsy first caught sight of him through a flimsy curtain at the window.

"Tony Garcia," murmured Patsy. "Tony, the Tiger. By Jove, Rita Carvalli is after him and has found him."

"Who the devil is coming?" Garcia was saying, half in his throat. "That can't be your skirt, Piccone, with a tread like that. She comes down the stairs like a leopard. She—hell! it's Rita Carvalli."

The girl had swept into the room, with her white face looking like that of a corpse, in contrast with her somber hat, and the black garments clinging to her sinuous figure.

Garcia was on his feet in an instant, and one hand went to his hip pocket.

His companions sprang up—Piccone, Derosa, and Jasper Meagle.

The poker chips they were using were scattered over the floor.

The girl confronted the sinister quartet, smiling with ghastly familiarity.

"Hello, Tony," she said. "And hello the rest of you. What do you say, Tony? Do you want me?"

Tony Garcia stared at her like a man turned to stone—and it takes something most extraordinary to petrify the big finger of an East Side gang.

"Want you?" he gasped. "What do you mean?"

"You heard me," said Rita.

"But do you mean it?"

"It's up to you."

"Mine—you."

"I'm yours for the taking——"

"Then, by——"

"Hold on! Yours, Tony—after something has been done!"

Garcia came out of his trance.

"Oh, I'm wising up," he cried, with eyes glittering. "Sit down again, pals, and keep your shirts on. The moll has something up her sleeve."

"It looks so, Tony," growled Derosa, who had been gazing from one to the other.

"I wondered at her blowing in and chucking herself at me like a Christmas hand-out."

"Find out what's eating her," suggested Piccone, grinning.

Rita Carvalli listened without a change of countenance.

"I'm beat four ways from the jack," vouchsafed Meagle, the fourth man of the gang.

Tony Garcia pointed to a chair.

"Sit down," he commanded. "Sit down and spiel your story. What's got on your nerves?"

"You heard what I said," replied Rita. "Do you want me?"

"You know I want you. I've always wanted you."

"I'm yours, then—after it's done."

"After what's done?" Garcia asked, with a fierce snarl. "Cut out the blind buff and give it to me straight. What do you want?"

Rita Carvalli spread her white hands on the dingy table and fixed her eyes on Garcia's flushed face.

"I want two men brought here to-night," she said, with bitter ferocity.

"For what?"

"So I can have my say to them."

"And what then?"

"Then?"

The girl broke into a fierce, mirthless laugh.

"I may stab them, then, as I have been stabbed—or hand them to the bulls," she cried shrilly.

Garcia flashed a swift, fiery glance at his listening comrades. It silenced one and all. He lurched forward in his chair and seized the girl's wrists.

"Tell me!" he cried. "Are they wanted by the bulls?"

"Yes. Wanted bad."

"Who are they?"

"One is Gid Preston, who runs the Orville House."

"Oh, ho! He has given you the chilly mit, eh?"

"That's my business."

"Who is the other?" Garcia demanded.

"His name—his name is Greenleaf," faltered Rita. "He has a room in the house. Preston knows. You can get them both, get them dead easy—if you do what I'll tell you."

"Can, eh?"

"Say you'll do it, Tony!" she pleaded. "Say you'll do it, and then——"

"And then?"

She leaned forward and twined her arms around the neck of the crouching man.

"Say you'll do it, Tony! Do this for me, and then I'm yours—yours—yours! Always and forever—yours!"

"Mine!" Garcia's voice was a half-choked roar. "I'll do it! I'll get them! I'll get them for you, Rita, if I have to bring them by the throat. I'll get them! I'll——"

He broke off like a flash, leaping to his feet.

The same sound that had startled and alarmed him, turning to evil desperation his swelling passion for the girl, had also given Patsy Garvan a chill down his spine.

It was the voice of a man who had crept around a corner of the house, and who was then crouching about four feet from Patsy, with a revolver leveled at his head.

"Dukes up, kid!" he said sharply. "Up with 'em, or it's the boneyard for you!"

Patsy arose from his kneeling posture and threw up his hands. He could see murder in the man's eyes, and knew he was easily capable of it. For Patsy recognized him on the instant—Gilman Hart, another of the Garcia gang, making the last of the five who, if Phil Langham's suspicions were correct, had put away Tomaso Carvalli.

In another moment, Garcia, closely followed by his gang, appeared in the yard. The thugs surrounded Patsy, quickly running him into the house. Once inside, he was speedily recognized, and almost as speedily secured and tied to a chair.

"A dick, eh?" leered Garcia, glaring at him. "One of Nick Carter's push. What d'ye want nosing round here?"

"Find out," said Patsy nonchalantly. "It's up to you."

"But you've got nothing on us."

"I haven't got all that's coming to me, then," said Patsy dryly.

"You'll get it, all right, now that we've got you," Garcia retorted.

"Rats!" cried Rita, subduing her surprise. "There's nothing to fear from him. He must have been on the right trail and shadowed me here. Don't let him detain you, Tony. He'll make a good witness. Remember—I'm to be yours!"

"I'll get them," snarled Garcia. "Here, pals, I've a word for you."

He drew his four confederates to a corner, near where Patsy was seated, and began giving them whispered instructions.

Patsy strained his ears to hear them, but he caught only the last words that were said.

"But what about the dick?" Derosa asked apprehensively. "He might——"

"Hang the dick!" hissed Garcia fiercely. "We'll hand him what I gave Tom Carvalli a year ago, if it comes to a show-down."

The last was said too low to reach Rita Carvalli's ears, but Patsy heard it—and knew what it would be worth against such men as these in a criminal court.

Garcia swung round and approached the girl.

"Now tell me," he cried; "what you want me to do."

"Come upstairs, Tony, and I'll tell you," snapped Rita, with a devilish light in her eyes.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CLOSING NET.

There was, indeed, as Nick Carter had remarked to Patsy Garvan, much more in the wind that night than he had anticipated.

It was not in Nick Carter's nature, however, to fail to take advantage of all there was in the wind. It was his invariable custom to strike while an iron was hot.

Half past eight that evening, precisely twenty-four hours after the killing of Darcy, a rapidly driven taxicab stopped about a block from the Langham residence.

Two men alighted—Nick Carter and Philip Langham.

The latter had discarded the gray plaid suit worn in his room in the Orville House. He was clad in a dark suit and felt hat, and he was certainly a strikingly clean-cut, well-built man. He compared very favorably, indeed, with the detective himself.

Nick stopped before reaching the corner, saying quietly:

"You wait here, Phil, until I return. I'll nose around a bit and find out whether Preston is still there. I'll not be long."

"I'll wait," said Langham.

Nick glided away in the starlight.

It did not, indeed, take him long. He very soon learned that Preston had departed, and that Patsy and Rita Carvalli also had disappeared.

Five minutes later, again with his companion, Nick rang the bell of the Langham residence. The butler answered it, and but for the detective's uplifted finger, he would have uttered a cry of surprise upon beholding the young man who for more than a year had not dared to cross his own threshold.

"Keep quiet, Payson," Phil cautioned him. "It's all right, and there is nothing to fear. Is Miss Luella in the library?"

"Yes, sir."

"Alone?"

"Yes, sir. She——"

But the butler got no further with his response. For the stately figure of the woman herself, looking ghastly pale and anxious, appeared at that moment in the lighted hall, and saw the two men at the door. A scream, half of dismay, half of relief, broke from her, while she grasped a baluster rail for support.

"Good heavens!" she cried affrightedly. "You here—Phil!"

Before his name was fairly uttered, Langham had her in his arms and was fondly kissing her.

"Don't be alarmed, Luella," he said roundly. "I'm on the up track, and can see sunshine. I'll explain in half a minute. First let me introduce you to Mr. Nick Carter, the detective. I'm in his hands, now."

"In his hands—arrested!" gasped the nonplused woman.

"No, not arrested, Miss Langham," said Nick, approaching. "Phil will never be arrested for the killing of Carvalli, if I can prevent it—and I think I can."

"But——"

"You will presently understand," Nick kindly interrupted. "Your amazement means more to me than to Phil, Miss Langham, for I think I can guess the occasion."

"Well, well, we'll explain in a moment, Luella," put in Langham. "Let's get about it, too, for Mr. Carter's time is valuable. Come into the library, and we'll soon have things down pat."

Miss Langham composed herself with an effort, returning with them to the handsomely furnished room.

It took only a short time to inform her of what had transpired, and of what Nick's designs consisted, in so far as he saw fit to disclose them.

It is needless to say, moreover, that Luella Langham's first fears and misgivings speedily gave place to indescribable relief and rising hopes.

"I can hardly realize it, Mr. Carter, that the greatest detective in the country believes in Phil's innocence, despite that I never have doubted it. I am more than rejoiced."

"Partly so, I imagine, because of what Mr. Gideon Preston has been saying to you," replied Nick, smiling. "Am I right, Miss Langham?"

She stared at him with increased amazement.

"Good heavens! How did you know?" she asked, at once becoming more serious.

"We detectives have peculiar methods for obtaining information," Nick rejoined. "It is very necessary for Phil's sake that I should know the truth, Miss Langham, and I want you to be perfectly frank with me. I know that Preston called on you this evening. Did he propose to you?"

Miss Langham colored deeply, and her face took on an expression of insuperable scorn.

"If one could call it a proposal—yes," she admitted.

"Ah, I see," Nick quickly exclaimed. "His proposal was, in reality, a demand."

"Exactly."

"In other words, he threatened to expose Phil, and hand him over to the police, unless you consented to marry him."

"That is precisely what he threatened."

"I thought so, but wanted to be absolutely sure," said Nick. "Have you ever given him any encouragement?"

"Never!" Luella declared forcibly. "I have endured his visits only in order that I might, if I had been seen going to his hotel, have said that I went there to call on the manager. But he in some way discovered Phil's identity, and—well, he tried to make the most of it."

"What did you finally tell him this evening?" Nick inquired.

"I told him I wanted a few days in which to consider the matter," replied Luella. "I did so, however, only that I might stealthily inform Phil, and thus enable him to escape."

"You have done, nevertheless, the very thing I hoped you would do," Nick said, with manifest satisfaction. "I now can see where there will be something doing that will serve my ends."

"What——"

"No, no, don't ask me what," added Nick, smiling. "Let the proof of the pudding be the eating. I want to know, now, whether you have had any falling out with Harrison Floyd?"

"With Harry?" Miss Langham exclaimed. "Why, certainly not! Why do you ask such a question, Mr. Carter?"

"Well, for no reason except that I have heard that you and he are engaged."

"So we are, though it has not been formally announced."

"H'm, I see!" said Nick. "I think——"

The ringing of the doorbell interrupted him.

The butler, hurrying through the hall a moment later, announced:

"Mr. Floyd. Mr. Chickering Carter."

"Ha!" Nick ejaculated. "Admit them, Miss Langham, by all means. Chick is one of my assistants, my right-hand man, and I predict that he has been getting in some work."

"Show them in, Payson," Luella commanded.

Both entered a moment later, Floyd in advance, and Chick with a curious smile hovering around his lips.

Miss Langham arose and received them. Before she could speak, however, Floyd broke forth in an impulsive, manly fashion, which was quite characteristic of him:

"One moment, Luella, please," he cried. "I've got to unload my mind and make you a heartfelt apology before I do anything else."

"Goodness! What do you mean?"

"I've been a blind, unpardonable fool," Floyd declared. "I heard that you were friendly with Gideon Preston, and I happened to see you, or thought I did, go into the Orville House last night. I followed you, and saw you you enter a suite.

"I was not dead sure it was you, mind you, and, half mad with jealousy, I waited on a stairway until you departed. You went down in the elevator, and I chased down the stairs like a madman in my effort to identify you. Instead of interrogating you, man fashion, I've been mulling over it all day, until Chick Carter finally rounded me up and——"

"Yes, after a decidedly long hunt," put in Chick dryly.

"And when I confided in him, for we are old friends," Floyd impetuously went on, "he convinced me that there must be some other explanation of that visit, and insisted that I should come here and find out. I now see plainly enough that I was wrong, and I——"

Miss Langham, aglow with blushes, checked him with a gesture.

"You are going to do just what I command, Harry,"

she said feelingly. "I, too, may have done wrong in not confiding in you. Let us forget all about it."

"Done!" cried Floyd, seizing both of her hands. "Now, Chick, for Heaven's sake tell me what all this means. We saw this gathering before we entered, as we were passing the windows, and knew that something extraordinary must have transpired."

"It's up to Nick to explain," cried Phil, shaking hands with Floyd. "Do so, Carter, please."

Nick at once complied, and all hands were soon informed of what had occurred. Chick explained that he had not found Floyd until early evening, and that he then had taken steps to solve one part, at least, of the complicated case.

"Well, well, we are all right so far," Floyd declared. "But what's to be done next?"

"That, also, is up to me," Nick replied, a bit oddly. "There is something doing of which you people know nothing, but the nature of which I think I can guess."

"We, then——"

"You will remain here and keep quiet," Nick interrupted. "With Chick to aid me—I will do all that the case now requires."

CHAPTER IX.

NICK CARTER'S RUSE.

Nick Carter, in company with Chick, both in disguise, sauntered into the office of the Orville House soon after nine o'clock that evening. They attracted no more attention than a score of others who at intervals had done the same.

The glance of both fell upon Gideon Preston. He was talking with one of the clerks in the inclosure. He was wearing the smile of a man who felt that he had things coming his way, and whose mind was without a burden.

"I'll leave him to you," Nick murmured.

Chick merely nodded, and then they separated.

Nick sauntered toward a corridor leading to the elevators. Presently, he slipped unobserved up the stairs. A few moments later, still making sure that he was not seen, he opened the door of Langham's suite with a picklock, entering and switching on the light.

The disguise jerked from Langham's face two hours before was lying on the table where he had left it. The gray plaid suit that he had habitually worn around the hotel, but had discarded when leaving with the detective, had been tossed on the bed in the alcove.

Nick Carter at once began to disrobe, hanging his own garments in a closet.

Twenty minutes later he was seated in an armchair, clad in the gray suit, wearing the gray disguise, with his countenance so altered with materials recently used by Langham, that he then was a perfect counterfeit of the late Mr. Arthur Greenleaf, of London, England.

Nick had seated himself to await developments.

He needed no one to tell him why Rita Carvalli had been spying at the Langham residence. He knew all about her relations with Preston, and of what her fiery Italian blood was capable, if cast aside like a discarded glove for the sake of another.

Nick knew, moreover, that she must have heard Preston's disclosure of Langham's true identity, and why the disclosure, and he knew that some speedy move would follow—in which the so-called Greenleaf would be seriously involved.

Nick Carter was not slow to take advantage of such an opportunity. He had not the slightest doubt that the move would be made—and he had less than half an hour to wait for it.

A knock sounded on his door.

"Come in!" he called, perfectly imitating the voice affected by Langham.

The door opened, and Gideon Preston, clad in street attire, entered. He no longer was smiling. His face was very pale.

Nick appeared oblivious to any change in his appearance, but hastened to rise and receive him.

"Dear me!" he exclaimed. "Is it you, Mr. Preston? Will you take a chair?"

"No, no, I am not going to stop," replied Preston, forcing a smile. "I want you to do me a little favor, Greenleaf, if you are willing."

"Willing!" Nick echoed. "Dear me, I shall be delighted."

"I thought I could call on you," said Preston. "I have to make a visit with a friend of mine to another part of the city. We may need a witness to what occurs. If you are willing——"

"To go with you?" put in Nick.

"Yes."

"Really, I am much more than willing, Mr. Preston. I'll put on my coat and hat, and be with you in a moment. Where is your friend?"

"Waiting in the corridor."

"Ah!"

Nick Carter was ready in half a minute. He switched out the light and followed Preston from the room. They were joined in the corridor by—Tony Garcia.

"Ah, Tony, the Tiger," thought Nick. "Rita Carvalli has gone back to gangland, and is out for blood. Precisely as I anticipated. She shall have it, too—but not through the agency of Tony Garcia."

Preston introduced him, and Garcia shook hands with the detective, eying him narrowly, but with no sign of his thoughts reflected in his sallow, swarthy face.

"We have a taxicab at the side door, Mr. Greenleaf," he said, with a sinister smile.

"I am entirely at your service," said Nick. "Command me."

Preston led the way down the stairs and into the waiting taxi. Little was said while it sped swiftly through the city streets. It was half past ten when it stopped in front of the house in Forsyth Street.

Garcia paid the chauffeur and sent him away.

"Come in," said he, producing a key.

Preston followed, and Nick brought up in the rear—slipping a revolver into each side pocket of his coat.

Garcia did not conduct them to the basement, where Patsy still sat tied to a chair in the kitchen, also effectively gagged. Garcia led them into a back room, in which four of the gang and Rita Carvalli, divested of her street garments, then were seated. There were chairs for Nick and Preston, to which Garcia grimly waved them.

"I've got them," he said simply, with a glance at Rita.

She sat in one corner of the room, with three of the gang near her.

The fourth, Derosa, joined Garcia near the closed door, while Nick and Preston sat back against one of the walls.

It was a position that suited Nick to the letter, for it enabled him to cover the entire gang.

Preston, scowling darkly, gave rein to his suppressed feelings before the girl could speak.

"What do you mean? What do you mean, Rita, you jade, by having me brought to this place?" he cried. "What do you mean by sending me such a letter? What do you mean by such threats as you wrote, and sent by this man Garcia? What do you——"

Rita Carvalli checked him with a gesture, with the light of vengeful triumph flaming in her eyes.

"You keep your shirt on, Gid," she cried, with caustic inelegance. "You know what I mean, or you wouldn't be here. But I've had you brought here just so that I can tell you what I mean."

"Tell me, then, and——"

"Oh, I will, all right, and I'm going to make it short, too," snapped Rita, interrupting. "I heard what you said to Lou Langham to-night."

Preston's jaw dropped, and his face turned white and haggard.

"You've tossed me aside, as if I were a scurvy cat," continued the girl. "But I've got you where I want you, and you're going to pay the price."

"Price——"

"Yes, price! I dropped into the side parlor to see you last night, but you did not come when I rang. I guessed you were out, and I was going to go—if I hadn't heard your voice through the door of a suite I was passing. I peeked through the keyhole, Gid, and I saw you knife Jack Darcy, the house dick. That's how I've got you—and I knew you'd come here when I wrote what I did."

"But——"

"There aren't any buts!" cried Rita, with a half-choked scream of hatred. "You're a dead one! You're down and out! You're a wolf inside, as you've been a wolf in your house, and I've thrown you down because you threw me down. I've got you—and I've got him!"

She turned, with eyes blazing, and pointed to Nick.

"I've got him, too, the man who killed my brother—and it's the chair for both of you!" she shrieked. "Pull off his disguise! Pull off his disguise, Tony, and you'll find—Phil Langham!"

Garcia uttered a cry and started to obey.

"Oh, since I'm known, I'll remove it myself," said Nick, swaying forward in his chair, and sweeping the disguise from his head and face.

It fell upon the floor, and when he straightened up he held a revolver in each hand, instantly covering—as startled and dismayed a gang as ever stood in leather, and in a corner from which there was no sane move for escape.

"Hell!" Garcia cried, with a roar. "It's Nick Carter!"

"Now, keep cool, you fellows," Nick advised. "I know you all, and know what you can do with a gun. If every hand isn't in the air in another second, I'll send a bullet into the owner of it. That's right! Up with yours, Preston, too, for you're the worst wolf of the lot."

"Oh, you've got nothing on us, Carter," Garcia growled. "We had no hand in the job."

"That can be settled later, Tony," Nick replied. "Don't let me see one of you make a move, or he'll be a dead one."

Nick ended the last with a long, piercing whistle.

It was followed by the hurried tread of feet on the hall stairs, and then Chick, who had shadowed Preston to the house, quietly entering and releasing Patsy, strode into the room with the latter. Both were armed—and in less than five minutes the entire gang was disarmed and handcuffed in pairs.

Nick then held a brief conference with his two assistants.

"I've got all the necessary evidence against Preston," said Chick. "The Ascott jewels are in his room, and the wig he wore when he killed Darcy."

"And I've heard enough to clear Langham of the Carvalli croaking," whispered Patsy. "Tony, the Tiger, did the job."

"What did you hear?" inquired Nick.

Patsy told him.

"Good enough! It will be worth while to witness the gratitude of Phil and his sister," said Nick. "We have a cinch on the whole business. Go out, Patsy, and call the patrol wagon and a bunch of officers. We'll turn this whole gang over to them. I want to wash my hands of such a bunch."

Patsy rushed out to obey.

Ten minutes passed, and then the rattle of wheels was heard, and a posse of police hurried into the house.

It was for the courts to sift out the guilty and impose the penalty of the law.

THE END.

"The Yellow Coupon; or, Nick Carter's Shortest Trail," which will be found in the next issue of this weekly, No. 86, out May 2d, tells more about the characters of which you have just finished reading.

Inspector Watts' Great Capture;

Or, The Case of Alvord, the Embezzler.

By ALDEN F. BRADSHAW.

CHAPTER V.

THE FIAT OF JIM GREENLEAF.

The carriage was not Alvord's, but the horses were his. Alvord's horses were invariable for their style and speed, and his penchant in this direction was fairly a weakness.

The strange carriage, drawn by a pair of ordinary bays, had arrived at the Alvord residence less than a half hour before the arrival of Detective Keene, and the team had quickly been taken by the groom and removed to the stable.

But not until the solitary occupant of the carriage had alighted and been admitted to the house, after a word to his driver, who immediately departed.

That the visitor's features were well known there, and that he was in close touch with the master of the house, were evident as the servant admitted him without a word, and readily answered the question he asked as he came over the threshold.

"Is Mr. Alvord at dinner or in the library?" he demanded, with a low voice.

"He's in the library, Mr. Greenleaf. You can go in."

"I'll gamble I can go in!" growled Greenleaf to himself.

He was in ill humor. His search for Alvord had been a long one, and the dangers involved in the delay had been a constant source of irritation. Without removing his topcoat, he proceeded to the library and unceremoniously opened the door. Alvord was seated in an easy-chair before the fireplace, his head bowed, his gaze fixed upon the glow of coals.

His indifference indicated that Greenleaf was expected. He merely raised his eyes, and, with a slight gesture, signed the man to a chair, saying moodily:

"Close the door. I heard from Haskins that you were looking for me, and would come out here. You were here earlier, I am told."

"Yes!" said Greenleaf shortly, with a resentment only in part concealed. "And if I hadn't heard from Haskins after he met you, I should still be wild-goose chasing. Where have you been, and what's wrong?"

"Everything is wrong!" said Alvord, with his resonant voice, quite low and utterly without emotion. "Everything is wrong!"

"Not at the bank?"

"Yes, at the bank!"

"Do you mean——"

"I mean that the dance is up, and the piper now must be paid!"

It was quietly said, with a calmness like that of a man who, after a long and severe mental strain, relaxes completely, and drops the tension of battle for the apathy of helpless despair.

Jim Greenleaf heard only what the circumstances had led him to anticipate, yet when given the positive assurance his cheeks grew steadily pale, and the perspiration rose on his forehead in tiny drops that glistened visibly in the lamplight.

"Do you mean"—he again began.

But Alvord again interrupted him, now with some irritation.

"You know what I mean, James Greenleaf! Must you see it in black and white, or have it proclaimed from the housetops? You know what I mean when I say that the game is up—hopelessly up!"

Greenleaf frowned darkly, but the fiery gleam of the crafty eyes under his drawn brows rivaled that of the stone in his shirt front.

"Can nothing be done?" he demanded.

"No, nothing."

"Is the exposure imminent?"

"Yes, very!"

"The truth isn't already known, is it?"

"I cannot say how much is known. I have not been to the bank to-day."

"Are you taking no steps to avert the disaster?" asked Greenleaf angrily.

"What's the use?" Alvord rejoined, in tones of somber moodiness. "The disaster cannot be averted. I tell you again, the game is up!"

Greenleaf's voice fell lower, and his manner, rather than perturbed and anxious, became desperate and threatening. He started up from his chair, with his hands clenched and his sturdy figure shaken with suppressed feeling.

"The game is up, eh?" he said vehemently. "Well, what do you propose doing, in that case?"

Alvord raised his heavy eyes to the man's pale face, knowing well by what apprehensions he was moved.

"I haven't decided yet, Greenleaf," he replied indifferently.

"Then, by Heaven, I'll decide for you!"

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean what I say! I mean that you must leave the country; that you must evade arrest; that not a moment shall be lost——"

"Oh, sit down!" exclaimed Alvord sharply. "Your excitement wearies me. I don't know that my interests will best be served by escape and flight. What use to exile myself from——"

"Exile yourself from nothing!" interrupted Greenleaf, with suppressed passion. "Your exile should be of secondary consideration, now that the worst has come! The interests of others must not be sacrificed, even if you are willing to throw up your hands and go to the wall.

"Oh, that's it, is it?"

"Aye, that is it!" Greenleaf forcibly continued. "Your exposure may involve that of others, in event of your arrest. You have been a game sport, Alvord, and have cut a swell figure on the race track and at Saratoga——"

"I wish I had never met you at Saratoga, nor laid eyes on you or any of yours!" cried Alvord bitterly.

"That's neither here nor there!" retorted Greenleaf. "You were ready enough to take up with me and mine, and to make through me your plunges there and in Wall Street. Now that the game is up, mark me! I propose to stand between you and a betrayal of others, as I have stood between you and earlier exposure. There are no ifs, ands, or buts about it, Alvord! You must leave the country!"

"If I decline?"

"If you decline, I will expose facts in your career——"

"Peace!" Alvord now interposed, with a deprecatory sweep of his powerful arm. "You can expose nothing that will not speedily be exposed without you. Don't imagine that you can intimidate me with your threats."

"I want to know what you intend doing," Greenleaf still persisted, in threatening tones. "I am not here without a purpose, and I'll not be put aside. I want to know what you mean to do at this crisis of affairs, and know I will!"

"I don't see how you can, Greenleaf, since I myself do not know," Alvord answered shortly. "I only know at present that I shall remain under cover till I have decided what is best to be done."

"But you cannot safely remain here," protested Greenleaf forcibly. "It's ten to one a warrant may be issued for your arrest, and that an officer may be here before morning in search of you."

"Alas! that's true enough," Alvord dismally admitted.

"You must at least leave here until your own plans are laid—and mine!" the go-between zealously argued. "The interests of others require it. Your arrest must be prevented, your escape insured. I will not answer for your life, even, if it becomes known that——"

"Peace! Don't threaten my life. I have ceased to value it."

"But others have lives that are valued, and reputations, as well!" cried Greenleaf sternly. "Once for all, you cannot remain here. You are courting arrest by such indifference. An officer even now may be on his way here. If you were arrested to-night, the devil himself couldn't avert the downfall of——"

It was at this moment that Sheridan Keene rang at the front door.

The sound of the bell, following so closely upon Greenleaf's words, seemed to affect Alvord like an electric shock. He sprang to his feet, pale and trembling, and listened intently for a moment; then he hurried to the library door, having heard a step in the hall.

"Answer the bell!" he cried softly, to the woman who met his startled gaze. "Answer it yourself!"

She hastened through the hall and opened the door, while the defaulter stood listening, his strained ears taking in all that was said. When mention was made of the bank, he shuddered violently, and peered between the door and the casing in an attempt to identify the clerk.

"It's a lie!" he muttered angrily. "That man is a stranger! He does not come from the bank!"

"More likely an officer, a detective!" said Greenleaf, with intense virulence. "If he has a warrant——"

"Warrant or not, I'll not be taken yet!" cried Alvord passionately.

Perhaps the sudden imminence of this fate, or the words of Greenleaf, or the natural aversion one would feel to being arrested in one's own home—possibly all of these combined, shaped Alvord's immediate conduct. He wheeled sharply to Greenleaf and said, as the front door was closed:

"What's to be done?"

"Leave here by all means!" cried Greenleaf instantly.

"But where can I go?"

"With me! My carriage is in the stable! I'll conceal you in New York for a time, then in Boston! From there you must leave the country before any arrest can be effected, or your——"

The bell again.

"Answer it!" cried Alvord, with a wave of his hand toward the woman in the hall.

Then he swung round and caught Greenleaf's arm.

"This way!" he muttered excitedly. "By the rear door! Hasten! hasten!"

They passed out through the gloom of the night, and reached the stable five minutes in advance of Sheridan Keene.

"Hitch my horses in place of those!" Alvord hurriedly commanded, addressing one of the grooms. "If a man comes out here in search of me, I wish to evade him!"

"Sure, sir, I've that to me!" cried the groom. "Get into the carriage, both of you! Now, faith, let the man come!"

CHAPTER VI.

A SECOND MOVE BY DETECTIVE KEENE.

Sheridan Keene did not overtake the carriage containing Alvord and James Greenleaf. The fall to which he had been so treacherously treated gave the detective a considerable handicap, and, though he maintained a sharp pursuit for a time, he finally was distanced, and the rapidly driven carriage was swallowed up in the darkness.

Cooling down from his temporary excitement, Keene realized that he could have done nothing more than to have asked a few questions, which Alvord could have answered or not, as he pleased. He could not have detained the man. There was no warrant out for his arrest. Suspicion of him was not even general. No officer on the force could legally detain him.

He decided to turn the episode merely to his own use. He now suspected, assuming Alvord to be guilty of felony, that he had been plunging heavily in stocks, possibly concealing the fact by making his deals through a third party or parties. It might be, too, that through speculation and gambling Alvord had indiscreetly put himself in the power of some clique of crooks or gamblers, by whom he had been driven deeper and deeper in vice.

This last seemed very probable to Sheridan Keene, who did not fancy the looks and actions of Greenleaf; and he resolved that, if such a gang of crooks were involved, they should meet their just deserts along with the defaulter. Yet they were not ordinary crooks and ruffians, of that he felt certain. Alvord was not a man to associate with these. More likely they were the polished scoundrels whose operations are the most difficult to detect.

Communicating with Chief Watts by the long-distance telephone next morning, and imparting his discoveries and his own views of the case, Detective Keene was advised to remain in New York and continue his investigations.

This he did, making during Saturday and Monday a vigorous search for Greenleaf in Wall Street and about the offices of the Stock Exchange. If he could find the latter, he through him could locate and keep track of Alvord until such action had been taken by the bank as would establish his guilt and warrant his arrest.

He ventured but few inquiries, however, lest an alarm should be given Alvord and his confederates. His efforts were not rewarded by a sign, even, of Greenleaf or the man with whom Keene had seen him talking the Friday morning before.

Meantime investigations at the bank were continued, the secret movements of the police were maintained, and the missing bank clerk still remained in the background, yet a much-desired person. By a stroke of good luck, and a result also of constant vigilance, it fell upon Detective Keene to locate the missing man.

Seeing nothing to be gained by a longer stay in New York, Keene left for Boston on Tuesday morning by the way of Springfield. As his train entered the latter station the New York westbound train was nearly due. Looking from the window of his car, and giving him an irrepressible start of surprise, Keene beheld among the people waiting on the station platform a young man answering the description of the missing clerk.

Quickly leaving his car, Keene caught the arm of a newsboy outside, and, slipping a half dollar into his hand, said hurriedly:

"Run out yonder, my lad, and call out, 'Archer! Archer!' as if to some playmate. Then run away about your business."

The lad's native shrewdness was sharpened by the coin, and he darted off to obey. In a moment, his shrill voice rang through the station, and at the sound of the name Sheridan Keene saw the man he suspected wheel sharply about, and stare perplexedly in all directions.

The evidence was sufficient. The man was undoubtedly Archer. And Sheridan Keene followed him aboard the westbound train, and took a seat behind him in the smoking car.

At Bridgeport the detective telephoned to Captain McClusky to meet him on the arrival of the train at the Grand Central station, intimating the occasion.

As they left the train Detective Keene drew to the young man's side and asked pleasantly:

"Isn't this Mr. Archer?"

"Why, yes," was the reply; "that's my name. But you have the best of me, sir."

"Haven't I seen you in the First National Bank?"

"I am employed there, sir."

"Been on a vacation?"

"A short one, merely a visit to friends in Boston and Springfield. But why do you ask me, sir?"

"I'll tell you presently," smiled Sheridan Keene, as they came down from the car. "Come out this way, if you please. The fact is, Mr. Archer—ah, here is a gentleman waiting for us! Mr. Archer, have you ever met Captain McClusky, of the police department? Permit me, captain, to present Mr. Archer, of the First National Bank."

The head of the New York police flashed a curious glance at the Boston detective, in which wonderment and admiration were mingled. He did not quite understand him, or how this move had been accomplished.

As for Archer, he turned pale for a moment, then flushed to the roots of his hair.

"Captain McClusky!" he gasped, instantly grasping the significance of what had transpired. "Good heavens! gentlemen, there is nothing wrong at the bank, is there?"

"Do you know of anything?" demanded Captain McClusky, with a searching scrutiny of the young man's face.

"Indeed, I do not!" cried Archer fervently. "I am just returning to resume my duties there to-morrow morning."

"We will go there now, instead!" said Captain McClusky, with austerity. I now will see that this matter no longer hangs fire."

He already felt convinced of Archer's innocence, as did Detective Keene, and, on their arrival at the bank, their convictions were corroborated. The examination of the books had now revealed unquestionably that Alvord himself was the defaulter, an embezzler to the amount of nearly seven hundred thousand dollars.

There was a warm time there that Tuesday afternoon. Though no warrant for Alvord was immediately sworn out, a step which Captain McClusky finally was compelled to enforce, the news of the enormous felony was given to the world, and the community thrilled through and through by the startling disclosure.

Then it was that Wall Street shivered and bankers shuddered. Then it was that the financial world trembled and stared aghast. Then it was that the pulse of police and sheriff was set beating faster, and that the outraged institution came forth with the offer of a great reward for the defaulter's arrest.

And then it was that there flashed to every police department of the civilized world that circular of warning:

"Look for Cornelius L. Alvord, junior, 52 years old; looks younger; 6 feet tall, weighs 280 pounds; brown hair, cut closely, and mixed with a little gray; mustache light brown, rather thin; dresses slouchily; round face; blue eyes; smokes incessantly."

CHAPTER VII.

STRIKING THE TRAIL.

Sheridan Keene returned to Boston that Tuesday night, via the Fall River Line. Since the exoneration of Archer, and the general publication of the great loss suffered by the bank, he was firmly resolved not only to capture Alvord, but also to run down the gang of speculators, gamblers, or whatever their nefarious vocation, through whom he now felt certain the defaulter had been operating, and by whom he very likely had been most outrageously fleeced.

Who these parties were, and how many the gang comprised, he could only conjecture; but that the two men of the Stock Exchange gallery were of the number, and that Alvord was still in active relations with them, seemed reasonably certain judging by the incident in Alvord's stable. Their past relations, however, as well as their present designs, were mysteries yet to be solved.

At nine o'clock Wednesday morning, the 24th, Detective Keene reported at the Boston headquarters, where he was received by Chief Watts with a hearty greeting and a word of commendation for the work already done. For more than an hour they remained in private consultation, until Keene had officially reported all of his discoveries, and the chief had fully grasped the details of the case as far as it had progressed.

Here again the ready faculty for analysis and discernment possessed by Chief Watts was apparent in his immediate deductions.

"It is very evident," he said, when Keene had concluded; "that there is more knavery than mystery in this affair."

"Do you think so, chief?"

"I do, indeed. I think Alvord has been to some extent at least a tool in the hands of others. It is my firm belief that, if the others can be located, Alvord also will be found."

"But why should he still cleave to them, Chief Watts?" inquired Keene doubtfully. "He must know that his crime is discovered, his guilt established, and that his only alternative is surrender or flight."

"That is true."

"Why, then, should he cleave to these knaves who, perhaps, have helped ruin him?"

Chief Watts laughed in a quiet way.

"The boot is probably on the other leg!" he said shortly. "The rascals are more likely holding fast to him. It is odds that they received some intimation of Alvord's impending exposure and, realizing how seriously they are involved in his downfall, they no doubt are making strenuous efforts to prevent his capture, fearing it may result in a full confession on his part, and in their own exposure and incrimination."

"By Jove, I believe that theory is correct, Chief Watts!" exclaimed Sheridan Keene, with enthusiasm.

"Hence I repeat, locate these scamps and you will probably locate Alvord. He no doubt has been speculating heavily, if not gambling on the race track and elsewhere. In a case where hundreds of thousands have been stolen and thrown into the maelstrom of Wall Street, who can say how many respectable brokers are more or less involved and indirectly culpable? Alvord's permanent disappearance and silence may be vitally necessary to the reputation of far more men than appears upon the surface."

"You are right, Chief Watts."

"Now, then, as to the line of work," Chief Watts earnestly continued. "You have the names of some of Alvord's friends here in Boston. I want you to look them up this morning, and see if from them any information can be gathered."

"I will set about it at once."

"During the day you will also make it a point to visit the hotels. You are familiar with the features of at least one or two of the gang in relations with Alvord. It is barely possible that you may run across one of these. If you should, you will know what to do."

"Well, rather," said Keene, smiling significantly.

"That is all now," nodded Chief Watts approvingly. "Whether you succeed in making any discoveries during the day or not, report to me again to-morrow morning. I then may have further instructions to give you. That is all."

Detective Keene immediately arose and took his hat.

"Good morning, chief," he said simply.

"Good morning—and good luck!"

Starting with the clews already secured, and following the lines laid out by the chief, Sheridan Keene devoted a greater part of the day to interviews with those acquaintances of Alvord whose names had been given him when in New York. His inquiries resulted in nothing of importance, however, as all of these friends of Alvord, who now had heard of the great defalcation, protested entire ignorance as to his movements.

After leaving the residence of one of these, and as he was returning down Boylston Street late in the afternoon, a sharp shower drove Keene to seek shelter. He was near the Hotel Touraine and there he found cover.

The magnificent office and rotunda of this fine hotel was thronged with people, many of them prominent business men, bankers, and brokers, who had dropped in there on their way uptown. Detective Keene had scarcely entered when his attention was attracted by a group of men near the broad fireplace, two of whom he recognized as large operators in State Street. Their conversation was animated, and that its subject was Alvord and his great defalcation led the detective to draw nearer, being more particularly interested in the observations made by one of these men.

"Oh, I am by no means sure, Brooks, that Alvord left the country, despite you are so certain!" he exclaimed, as Keene was approaching. "I have reason to believe quite the contrary."

"Perhaps you are in touch with him, Mr. Lawton, and are carrying some of his securities!" was the reply, which brought a laugh from the group. "I don't envy you in that case."

"Well, that is not the case," Lawton rejoined, coloring slightly. "But I met a man here less than half an hour ago who said he had seen Alvord this very day."

"I guess his sight was dazzled by the five thousand dollars' reward offered for seeing him," was the ironical reply. "Why didn't he nail him?"

"Oh, I'm not so sure he was wrong! He claimed to know Alvord well by sight, and evidently had no doubts about the fact."

"Did he say where he saw him?"

"Right here, gentlemen! In this very room!" declared Lawton, ignoring the amusement his statements were creating. "The man was no fool, moreover, despite that you think his claim was nonsense."

"Possibly not!" laughed Brooks incredulously. "A fool was Alvord at all events, if he ventured showing himself in the Hotel Touraine. The very idea is absurd."

Yet this same idea, and the assurance with which Lawton had spoken, led Detective Keene to await an opportunity, and then draw Lawton away from the group.

"I overheard what you said about a man who had seen Alvord," he explained, when they were alone. "I am Detective Keene, of the Boston force."

"Oh, yes! I know your face now!" Lawton pleasantly interposed. "I have seen you in company with members of the bank squad. What can I do for you?"

"Tell me precisely what the man said about seeing Alvord, if you please."

"If you overheard me, you already know," laughed Lawton. "He merely said that he saw him here in this office."

"Did he say when?"

"To-day."

"That doesn't seem very probable, yet it may be worth looking into. Are you acquainted with the man who states this?"

"Only casually, Mr. Keene."

"Do you know his name, and where he can be found?"

"I know only that his name is Alexander. He is a Western man, and I think he is a commercial traveler. I imagine he is at one of the hotels."

"Ah, yes! Thank you."

Though the story did, indeed, seem rather improbable, the zest with which Detective Keene followed up a clew, even if a visionary one, was manifest next morning. About nine o'clock he entered the office of Chief Watts, in a rather hurried and eager way, saying immediately:

"Pardon the interruption, chief! I have a man outside, with whom I wish you to have a word. He says he has information about Alvord, but seems rather averse to disclosing it to me. Perhaps you can secure it."

Chief Watts, who was very busy at his desk, looked rather doubtful.

"Since a reward was offered for his apprehension, there are hundreds who imagine they have seen Alvord. There'll soon be as many clews as Alvord has stolen dollars," he said dryly. "However, bring him in here!"

And the portly chief inspector threw himself back in his large oak chair, and impatiently waited the brief interval till Detective Keene ushered into the room a rather prepossessing, well-dressed man, and forthwith closed the office door.

"Chief Watts?"

"I am Chief Watts, sir," bowed the latter, with a wave of his hand. "Take a chair. What's your business with me?"

And now the chief's eyes suddenly met those of the stranger, with that steady, penetrating scrutiny which somehow irresistibly confuses one not well armed with a consciousness of his own honesty.

But the stranger betrayed no disturbance.

"I understand, sir," he replied, "that a reward of five thousand dollars is offered for information leading to the discovery and arrest of Alvord, the New York defaulter. Now, if I felt sure——"

"One moment, please!" Chief Watts blandly interposed,

yet in a semidecisive way. "The reward will be all right, providing you have any information concerning him."

The stranger demurred for a moment, then replied:

"I know Alvord by sight, and I think I saw him yesterday at the Hotel Touraine."

"At the Touraine, eh? At what time and what was he doing?"

"I saw him once in the morning, sir, lounging back of a newspaper he was reading; and later I saw him reading a book."

"Do you mean that he was in the public reading room?"

"Not in the library, chief, but in the office," explained the stranger, meaning to distinguish between the general office, and the commodious and splendid library, which the magnificent Hotel Touraine provides for its patrons. "He was smoking most of the time I remained watching him."

"What's your name, sir?"

"Henry M. Alexander."

"Resident here?"

"My home is in Denver, Colorado. I am a traveling man."

"Have you ever had any dealings with Alvord?"

"None, sir."

"Then you don't know him personally?"

"Not as an acquaintance."

"At what hour did you last see this man at the Touraine?"

"Not far from one o'clock, sir. I have not seen him since then."

"Why didn't you inform an officer of your discovery?"

"Because I had read that no warrant had been issued for Alvord's arrest."

"I see! I see! Did you mention your suspicion to anybody at the Touraine?"

"No, sir; I did not."

"Can you state anything further in the movements of the man you think was Alvord?"

"No, sir. I have not seen him since yesterday."

"Then, that is all just now, Mr. Alexander. You leave me your address here in Boston. I will look this matter up, and perhaps communicate with you later."

"If it results in anything——"

"In that case I surely will, sir."

Chief Watts was evidently impatient to terminate the interview, and not until after Alexander's departure did he express his views to Sheridan Keene.

"While I am not much inclined to credit this story, it is worth investigating," he gravely observed.

"Shall I undertake it, chief?"

"I want you here. I will send Inspector Morrissey up there, and Douglass. It is hardly probable that Alvord has been hanging about in public, as asserted," Chief Watts slowly added, with a thoughtful knitting of his brows; "yet certain reports that I have read are leading me to lay the foundation of a theory which, it is barely possible, will not prove wholly erroneous. Yes, I'll look into it!"

The expression which had settled on his grave, forceful face suggested more even than his words. He arose quite abruptly, and going personally to the general office he dispatched the inspectors mentioned upon an inquiry to the Touraine, as well as the intermediate hotels.

Later in the day he called Sheridan Keene to his office, and gave him his further instructions.

"I begin to think, after all, that there may be some truth in Alexander's story," he gravely observed, signing Keene to a chair. "Inspector Morrissey tells me he learns that a man answering in a general way Alvord's description was seen in the office of the Touraine, and that he now cannot be located. I want a man to come over here who is thoroughly familiar with Alvord's personal appearance, and I then will extend my inquiries. I have communicated with Captain McClusky by telephone, and he will send on Detective Tinker, of the central office."

"At once, chief?"

"He is now on the way. He will arrive at the Southern Union at nine this evening. I want you to meet him there, and bring him here at once."

"I will do so."

"After I hear what he has to say of the developments in New York, we will visit the Touraine. If we discover positively that Alvord has been in Boston, there is a matter upon which I want you to quickly get to work."

"What is that, Chief Watts?"

"A search after the man you saw with him in Mount Vernon. Very possibly an attempt is being made to conceal Alvord in this city, and that this man is here and at the bottom of it. You know him by sight. To-morrow morning a vigorous search for him must be begun, providing we are assured that Alvord has been here. Detective Tinker will enable us to settle that."

"I think so, chief."

"Do not fail to meet him when he arrives."

"Surely not!" Keene exclaimed, rising. "And I will bring him here at once."

TO BE CONTINUED.

WINNING THE RACE.

By JAMES REYNOLDS.

"Can you keep your seat, Jimmy?" asked the captain, as he squinted knowingly at the little Irishman, who, with a most comical expression on his phiz, stood by the side of the old States' mare, which some of the boys from San Francisco had pitted for a quarter-mile race against a whole stable of mustangs the hombres of Chinendago had gathered in from the plains, swearing in bad Spanish and worse Indian these could outrun all the old mares that ever were foaled outside of Nicaragua.

Jimmy had closed his beadlike eyes, giving at the same time his head a thorough scratching, and replied:

"I'll thry, sur. Bedad, if I can't howld the ould mare in so that she won't go to the winning post too soon, it'll be because Jimmy McGuire don't know how to shtraddle a horse."

"But the thing'll kick and squeal like the Old Boy himself if you don't look well to yourself, and let one of the mustangs get the better of her."

Jimmy grinned, and his little black eyes fairly laughed as he once more examined the points of the sorrel, who stood with her head half drooping between her fore legs, with apparently about as much spirit in her carcass as a cat has that has just crawled out of water after an involuntary bath.

"I'm still of the opinion, captain, that ginger or red pepper would be the best for her."

"Well, as we haven't got either handy," responded the

captain, who was up to a trick or two about horseflesh, "we must take what we've got. I'll spur her up."

"Have yees it wid ye?" asked Jimmy.

"Yes, my boy. It's here under my poncho," was the answer.

By this time, the boys—all Californians—gathered around the mare, and commenced an eager discussion about the respective merits of the animals that had been entered for the race.

Although not a few of them were doubtful as to the result, they had all, for the honor of the great republic, placed their onzas in favor of the mare.

They felt, notwithstanding the risks they had taken, backed by such a turfman and joker as Captain Bird and his no less experienced friend Jimmy McGuire, that the Nicaraguans might not, after all, win the race; and yet when they glanced at the dilapidated old sorrel, looking as she stood more like a skin filled with old bones than anything animated, and then compared her with the sleek, trim-built mustangs that were to be her competitors, they could not help curse their luck at carrying a sorry joke so far.

The captain and Jimmy were confident. The former was ferocious for bets. When he could no longer get odds against the mare, he was quite content to put up his oro and plata dollar for dollar; and finally when the hombres hesitated at this specimen of his magnanimity, he was for giving odds.

When he had closed his book, which was only when he couldn't induce another native to risk a pacos, he found that he would in another half hour be richer or poorer by three thousand dollars.

"We'll stick 'em, Jimmy," he laughed, as he ascertained the grand total of his bets, "if you cling to the saddle."

"If I get off," was the response, "the hide ov the ould mare will have to come wid me. I've niver seen the baste yit, captain, that could say it placed Jimmy McGuire on his sate of honor widout first inquiring ef it was agreeable to him."

When the Americans saw how venturesome the captain had been, they took fresh courage, and once more scattered themselves over the plaza seeking whom they might book for their loose change, in some instances offering two to one in favor of the old jade that stood so disconsolately near the cathedral, with ears down, legs wide apart, and a particularly ravenous expression about the mouth, as much as to say that a peck of oats at that time would be agreeable to her stomach.

Two or three Americans, who had resided in California, and who had a somewhat confused notion that the Yankees knew what they were about, offered their dollars on the sorrel, but found few takers.

When the backers of the mare had again gathered around their "favorite," the captain told them that if they wanted to win their money, they must be sure to be near and keep the "yellowskins" as far away as possible from the mare until she had started.

"What are you up to, cap?" asked Martin, who had done the State some service as an auctioneer at Marysville, and who was looked up to as the general joker of the crowd. "What's in the wind?"

"That'd be telling, Martin. All you've got to do when the race is over, is to pocket your dollars. We'll bleed these cusses, from the comandante and pache down to the ugliest señorita in the town. When the game's up and we're safe away from here, I'll perhaps let you into a secret or two worth knowing when next you visit this part of the world."

The ground selected for the race was the plaza—a large square in old Chinendago; in the center of this stood the church, and behind which, at no very great distance, was the barracks, a long, low-roofed building, and the residence of the comandante, which also served as the hotel of the place, and at which the boys had put up in their progress to New Leon and the Atlantic.

Around this square the citizens and the peons of the ranches in the vicinity had gathered, with their wives and sweethearts—nearly all of whom, with the exception of the old ones, were handsome, dark-eyed brunettes, who were not loath to display their charms to los Americanos, whom they looked upon, to the evident discomfiture of many a tricked-out hombre, with unmistakable favor.

It was now near five o'clock, the hour set down for the race. The confident caballeros mounted their steeds and were gradually approaching, with many a curvet and other tricks of horsemanship, the place appointed for the start, and from which, at the first tap of the bell in the church tower, they were to dash forward.

"Mount, Jimmy," said the captain, "and you hold onto the old beast like grim death to a nigger. If you don't, we're done for."

"Be jabers an' yees must be gintle wid the crather, captain, at the start."

"Never fear, Jimmy. On your good management depends whether we get out of this place six or eight thousand dollars winners or losers. All you've got to do is to stick to the critter's back."

"Niver fear me, darlint," replied Jimmy—"keep a bright lookout, and drive the yellowskins as far away from the mare as possible when she starts.

"Get up, ould Sol!" cried Jimmy, as he stuck the rowel of a spur into the poor beast's side, thus inducing her to walk to the starting point.

"Are you all ready?" cried the comandante, in Spanish. He had been selected as judge of the race.

"Now, Jimmy, look out for yourself!" cried the captain.

"All ready!" yelled the captain. As he spoke, the bell tapped; on the instant, that which he held in his hand was placed under the animal's tail.

With a perfect yell, the animal jumped clear from the ground, and sprang forward at a tremendous pace, squealing as she ran, with all her might.

The cries of the poor creature were unintermittent. It was fearful to look at the enormous strides she took. Boston and Fashion, in their best days, could not "hold a candle" to her pace. Flying is a poor expression to use to convey anything like an idea of her speed.

Her competitors, the mustangs, were absolutely frightened at her terrific exertions, as she rushed, with the velocity of the whirlwind, past them.

Jimmy kept his seat admirably but it was evident, from his white face and scared looks, that he never dreamed of the effect of the captain's application to the brute.

Of course, the mustangs were soon left far in the rear. They were literally "nowhere," as the mare reached the winning post.

As she strode up, evidently in great agony, the captain rushed toward her, seized the tail, and, raising it, dexterously removed that which he had so adroitly put beneath it at the commencement of the race.

There could be no dispute as to the result. We pocketed our money with a gentle manner that must have raised us immensely in the esteem of the sporting fraternity of Nicaragua.

The captain was persuaded to sell the mare for a thousand dollars to an enthusiastic planter, who, I doubt not, calculated on making a fortune by her in some future Central American horse race.

"How did you do it, cap?" asked Martin, on the following day, as we were riding donkeyback toward New Leon.

"Verdad es verde," replied the captain, as he pulled from beneath his poncho a small prickly ball of the cactus specie. "These needles, combined with the original good blood of the mare, did the job for us."

We all laughed at the trick, except Jimmy McGuire. He swore roundly "that the divil himself must have been in the ould baste or the cactus ball when he rode her. Shure, captain, when she commenced squalin' so, I saw blue flames comin' out of her nostrils, and there was an awful smell of sulphur somewhere. If I hadn't crossed meself two or three times, the ould chap'd 'a' had me off her back, and among his imps long before we got to the winnin' post."

The trick was told in New Leon, and it got back to Chinendago, where, to this day, it isn't over and above advisable for any los Americano to "talk horse"—that is, if there are any machetes within reaching distance of infuriated hombres.

SAVED BY A PARROT.

"No, ma'am. She isn't called Polly. Her name is Loretta. I've had her a long while. A gentleman gave her to me. She is very old, and I'm fond of her, for she saved my life.

"I used to be a stewardess, and one trip I took care of a lady who fell ill on the voyage; and her husband was so thankful to me that he gave me a present of money, a gold watch and chain, and a new silk dress. And as I'd fallen in love with the parrot, he sent a boy to take it down to the steamer to me the day I sailed.

"I was fond of her from the first, and she picked talk up for herself just wonderful. She only needed to hear a thing two or three times to say it without asking; and when I left off going to sea, and settled down in a little house of my own with my nephew and his wife, why, there wasn't a call in the street she didn't catch.

"I am sorry to say that all my neighbors were not quite as respectable as I'd like to have 'em. There was one person that quarreled with her husband most disgraceful, and when he beat her she ran to the window, and yelled out: 'Murder! Police! You'll hang for this, John!'

"This happened twice a week often. And it wasn't long before Loretta caught it all, and could say it as well as the woman herself could; but the landlord turned these people out, and the parrot seemed to forget her accomplishments.

"I think she hadn't said any of these words for a year, when one evening Ephrahim Pettingil, my nephew, took his wife and child to the circus, and I stayed at home to keep house and have a bit of supper for them.

"Well, it was just nine o'clock, I remember, and I'd put Loretta's cage on the top of the dresser, and thrown an old green veil over it, and was just going down the cellar to get some pickled pigs' feet, when I heard a queer noise in the little bedroom behind the kitchen, and, looking up, I saw a face I shan't forget if I live to be ninety.

"'Twasn't a face any decent man would have. I knew it was burglars at once, and I made for the door to call help; but before I could get there he had caught me.

"'You needn't try that, you old wench,' he said and he held a pistol to my ear. 'If you value your carcass, you'll tell me where you hide your money jest about as quick as you can speak. I know it's in the house here.'

"I said to myself, 'I was a fool not to listen to Ephrahim, who always wanted me to deposit what I had in the bank.'

"I was afraid of banks breaking, and kept my cash in an old iron box in a hole down in the cellar, with a stone atop of it. I had made a good deal, and I had worked hard for it. And I'd left it in my will to Ephrahim, and to give it up seemed more than I could do; but the wretch held me by the throat, and the pistol was against my head, and so, after I'd held out as long as I dared, I said:

"'Well, if I must, I must. It's down the cellar, under the big stone; but don't you take all a poor woman has earned by the sweat of her brow.'

"'Don't you preach,' said he. 'Under the stone?'

"'In a box,' said I.

"'Swear it isn't a lie,' said he.

"'I swear,' said I.

"Then he turned round, and said:

"'I'd as soon kill a woman as I would a dog, and I'll put you out of the way of naming me.'

"Then he crammed his handkerchief into my mouth, and cocked his pistol, and my life wasn't worth a rap, and I was tryin' to say my prayers, when up in the air there came a voice, as hoarse and furious as ever I heard:

"'Police!' it called. 'Police! Police!'

"The thief stood still, and stared about him. I knew it was Loretta, but he could see nothing.

"'Murder! Murder! Murder!' shrieks the bird. And then: 'You'll hang for this, John! You'll hang for this, John! Police! Murder! You'll hang for this, John!' And such a shriek!

"And then the door was banging wide open, and the burglar was gone. I heard him tearing down the street. And as soon as I could get the handkerchief out of my mouth I screeched 'Police!' myself. They caught him. It was queer enough, but his name happened to be John, and that was what frightened him most, for he thought some one knew him. Anyhow, Loretta saved my life, and we are all very fond of her.

"Of course, I put the money in the bank after that, and took care to let folks know it, too."

A PET RHINOCEROS.

The most curious of pets is that possessed by some Singhalese children. It is nothing more nor less than an immense rhinoceros, with plates of tough hide like an armored ship. He is just such a beast as has killed scores of daring hunters who have penetrated the jungle. But this big fellow is as gentle as Mary's lamb, and allows children to play on his back, or squirt sweetened water into his mouth, without causing anything but a grunt to issue therefrom.

THE NEWS OF ALL NATIONS.

Arctic Holiday de Luxe.

If the newly formed English exploration syndicate raises the necessary funds, its proposed expedition to Baffin Island, in the Arctic, in search of gold, under the leadership of Captain Munn, will be carried out on a comparatively luxurious scale. The syndicate's prospectus invites passengers at £200—about $1,000—a head for a four months' voyage. Sport will be included, and each passenger will be allowed one polar bear, one seal, one walrus, two musk oxen, one wolf, and two white foxes, which he himself must shoot.

The ship will be fitted with electric light. Passengers will be provided with separate sleeping cabins and bathrooms with hot and cold water. A well-found library will be carried, also a piano and gramophone. Meals will be "as good as the circumstances of the voyage will permit." At any rate, wines, spirits, and cigars of the best quality will be available.

Paid for Eating.

It sounds like the ideal job when one hears of getting paid for eating, but there are two men in Uncle Sam's employ who draw their salaries mainly because of this, and they will vouch for the fact that such a little thing as a person might suppose. Of course, they do more than this. They investigate into foodstuffs, prepare reports, and do other things that a layman can hardly explain. But they get paid for eating as well.

The two men are Doctor C. F. Langworthy, chief, and Doctor Robert Milner, assistant, in the bureau of food hygiene of the department of agriculture. These two men have a corps of assistants who, like themselves, are required to do plain and fancy eating. Occasionally a subject is brought in, under the auspices of Uncle Sam, and he is placed in a contrivance which looks like a cell in a police station, and is fed and his temperature is taken. Reports are made as to the effect that the food had on him.

Not long ago a cheese investigation began. Every kind of cheese, rich, juicy cheese, crumbly cheese, cheese that was odorless, and cheese that smelled like a Tammany investigation, was brought into the office. Doctor Milner picked out a nice, ripe cheese and cut off a generous slab.

"Everybody try some," he urged, biting into his slice, and everybody did. For a week the office ate cheese omelette, cheese souffle, cheese pudding, plain cheese, baked cheese, fried cheese, and several other kinds of cheese.

The point was to determine whether cheese could be assimilated. The office decided that it could, and, inasmuch as some of the hardy workers ate six ounces a day without suffering the slightest ailment, the office seemed to be right.

Flies With Sixteen Aboard.

The London *Times'* St. Petersburg correspondent says that Sikorsky's giant biplane, *Ilya Mouromets,* makes flights daily over the metropolis and environs. It has flown for one and a half hours, carrying sixteen persons, and for two hours with the ordinary crew of eight. Seen from below it seems to ride the air without ony of the roll or pitch that is noticeable in smaller machines.

The *Ilya Mouromets* is propelled by four Argus motors of 100 horse power each, placed on each side of the fuselage, two in front and two behind. It is asserted by the inventor that two of these motors could be put out of action without causing an accident.

While the aëroplane was flying over St. Petersburg recently one of the motors became frozen and stopped. The speed of the aëroplane was diminished, but it continued on its course, and presently one of the crew was able to thaw out the motor and start it again.

Sikorsky intends to fit on a fifth 100-horse-power motor, and thus increase the speed.

The *Ilya Mouromets* has a wing area five times that of the ordinary Farnam biplane. The metal fuselage is 65 feet long and the forward part of the fuselage contains a number of cabins extending over a length of 28 feet. The cabins have large windows on both sides and also windows in the floor for observation and photographic purposes. At night the cabins are lighted by electricity. On the roof of the cabins there is a platform.

The total weight of the aëroplane is three and one-half tons. With a total development of 400 horse power the *Ilya Mouromets* can raise a total useful weight of a little over one ton, besides nearly eight hundredweight of fuel oil.

The mechanics can move about freely to attend to the motors and other parts of the machine without disturbing the equilibrium of the aëroplane while in flight.

Union Men Open Big Co-operative Store.

The Union coöperative store, owned by 20,000 union men, was opened recently in Indianapolis, Ind. The first article purchased was a picture frame to hold the charter of the newly formed women's label league.

This is the largest coöperative store in America, and is the first to be operated and owned by all divisions of union labor.

Here and There.

The total population of the world is now estimated at 1,700,000,000. This is based on the most recent censuses, which all civilized countries now take, with a careful estimate of the number of inhabitants of uncivilized lands.

The United States government, in coöperation with the chamber of commerce, of Bellingham Bay, Wash., is growing far finer hyacinths, tulips, and narcissi on its ten-acre bulb farm than any that are imported. There are few places in the world where these bulbs can be raised successfully.

Throughout the world one-fourth of all children die before 6 years of age, one-half before they are 16, and only one person in each 100 lives to the age of 65.

For the first time in fifty-nine years a woman has been chosen president of the Teachers' Association, of New Jersey. She is Miss Elizabeth Allen, the founder of the teachers' pension.

The United States has more than 6,000,000 employees and 1,600,000 railroad employees.

Many Greenland women are bald on the sides of their

heads, owing to their method of dressing the hair, which is pulled back tightly and held in place by a ribbon.

The most active volcano in the world is Bogoslof, which is situated forty miles beyond the Aleutian Islands, in Bering Sea. It is a continuous performer, and it is said it will make and destroy a mountain chain while you wait.

Every large steamship company spends millions of dollars annually to provide the necessities of life to the thousands of passengers who cross and recross the Atlantic. Last year one of the largest companies was at an outlay of $4,920,000 for provisions alone. It spent over $7,000,000 for coal.

The time that will be required for ships to go through the Panama Canal will be from ten to twelve hours.

A Spry Old Horse.

If "Old Barney," a 40-year-old horse, owned by George Dovenburg, of Preston, Minn., continues his friskiness for another year, his master declares he will drive the aged animal to the Panama Exposition at San Francisco.

Old Barney is really a pensioner now, and is required to work only enough to get exercise, but when he is hitched to a buggy he prances about like a colt. He is thought to be the oldest horse in Minnesota and one of the oldest in the country. He served eighteen years pulling a creamery wagon.

Wolves Come from Canada Upon Ice.

Wolves from Canadian forests walked across the frozen surface of Lake Erie this spring and were numerous along the northern Ohio shore. A gray wolf was seen on the ice about a quarter of a mile from shore by boys who were skating off Cedar Point. Two were chased by ice harvesters near Rye Beach, five miles east of Sandusky.

Amateurs to Play in World's Series.

Next October, when the champions of the major leagues are playing for the world's honors in baseball, the attention of the fans throughout the country, and especially in those towns and cities which do not have professional ball teams, may be divided. Arrangements are being made for a series between the pick of the amateur teams of the country to decide the championship of North America.

An effort will be made to play the amateur championship games on the same days of the professional contests. They will follow a series of intersectional games, which will gradually eliminate all teams until only two are left.

The country will be divided into sections and subsections. Clubs in each subsection will play games to pick out its best team. Then a series of contests between the subsections will eliminate all but one team, this aggregation to represent its section in another series. This will continue until the two best teams are left to battle for the honors.

Those who are favoring the amateur world's series declare there is no doubt that it will cause more interest than the annual games between the major-league pennant winners.

The State of Ohio already is organized well for elimination contests, Cleveland, Columbus, Cincinnati, Dayton, and Akron have formed associations. The Cleveland association contains 400 teams. Organizations in the smallest towns will have an opportunity to compete the same as clubs in the cities, but, of course, it will be more difficult to arrange games for the country towns, as the jumps necessarily will be longer than in densely populated centers, where the teams will be more numerous.

Falls With Dynamite; Killed by Explosion.

With a case containing a high explosive hidden beneath his coat, Frank L. Hennecke, aged 53, an electrician, of Bucyrus, Ohio, slipped and fell and was instantly killed by the resulting explosion. The explosion wrecked a near-by building and threw clerks in stores off their feet.

Gangman on Trial is Slain Despite Guard.

"Red" Simon, ex-convict and gangman, whose trial for the murder of Emmet Carroll on April 30, 1913, was begun recently at St. Louis, with six detective sergeants acting as a bodyguard for Simon, was shot and killed by Henry Zang, a bartender.

Zang was the State's star witness against Simon. The detectives assigned to guard Simon were one block away when they heard the shot. They found Simon dead.

Hurt, He Makes Own Crutches.

Despite the fact that his left leg was broken between ankle and knee, Stanley Krokoloski, a Polish farmer, of Loup City, Neb., dragged himself 100 feet to a thicket by a creek. There he cut two crutches with his knife, and upon these managed to drag himself a mile to the home of his brother, where he received medical treatment. To add to his discomfort, a blizzard was raging at the time, and the mercury was below zero. The farmer had been in town and was on his way home when his team ran away and threw him out of his wagon.

Two Perish in Antarctic.

Doctor Douglas Mawson, the explorer, has returned to Adelaide, Australia, after spending two years in the Antarctic. He declares his expedition has proved of vast value from a scientific standpoint, as it brought back numerous biological specimens procured by dredging. Proof of great mineral wealth, especially deposists of coal and copper, was discovered. Two of the party, Lieutenant Ninnis, of the British army, and Doctor Merz, a Swiss, died from starvation on a sledge journey. Doctor Mawson was alone for thirty days following the deaths of his two companions, but accidentally came upon a cache of food.

Colliding Balls Play Queer Trick.

A peculiar thing occurred at a major-league training camp recently. Joe Sugden was hitting to the infield and James was batting flies to the outfield. As Sugden hit a liner toward first base, James knocked a fly toward the left fielder. The balls met in the air. The infield ball was lifted to the center fielder while the outfield ball went to the second baseman.

"Never saw anything like that in all my days," said the veteran Sugden.

Matty Sticks to the Giants.

Christy Mathewson has turned down an offer of $65,000 for three years' work and has renewed his contract with the New York National League team. The $65,000 was offered the Giants' star pitcher by the Federal League.

"It is reported that you do not take the Federal League seriously," said a telegram sent to Matty by President Gilmore, of the Federal League. "Get acquainted with

the Federal League officials, and you will be convinced that we are not four-flushing. I will give you $65,000 for three years' services as manager of the Brooklyn club. $15,000 in advance. Answer."

About the time the famous twirler was expected to answer the telegram he was signing a contract with President Hempstead, of the New York club.

Just how Matty can afford to turn down the offer is not known. The outlaw league realized that the grand old pitcher, veteran of many seasons, and still able to put it over all others, would have been the best possible drawing card for the Federals. He was promised a life job, if he wanted it.

Live Sporting Notes.

When the Boston Red Sox team went through St. Louis on its way to Hot Springs, Ark., Mordecai Brown boarded the train for the purpose of inducing Ray Collins to jump to the Federal League. However, he found Collins guarded by two husky detectives, who started talking as hard as they could, whenever Brown tried to confer with Collins.

Willie Ritchie, lightweight champion was the first prize fighter to pay his income tax.

King George of England was pleased with the baseball as played by the world's touring White Sox and Giants teams. Some of the players were presented to him.

Johnny Kilbane, featherweight champion, won a lawsuit brought against him by Mrs. Bridget Kilbane, his stepmother, who claimed the boxer alienated the affections of her husband. After Kilbane had testified that his father, who is blind, had to do the washing, make the beds, and peel potatoes in a boarding house, despite his affliction, the jury returned a verdict favoring the champion.

Johnny Dundee placed himself in the front ranks of the lightweights when he made a punching bag of Pal Moore, a clever veteran.

The South Michigan League may place a team in Toledo, Ohio, which was abandoned by the American Association.

No club ever had a more noteworthy career in baseball than the Toronto Federal League team. It had no owners, no managers, no players, no park, and not even letterheads. It was born in January and died in February, and at no time was in the second division.

The next time Bob McAllister, the coast fighter, steps into a ring, it probably will be as a heavyweight. He weighs 172 pounds now.

If Charles Weeghman succeeds in making a success of the Federal League, Mayor Mitchell, of New York, will want him for police commissioner.

Tom Sharkey, former heavyweight champion, was compelled to shovel snow, while serving a term of thirty days in a New York jail for keeping a disorderly saloon.

June 27 has been selected as the date for the heavyweight championship bout between Frank Moran, of Pittsburgh, Pa., and Jack Johnson. It will be held in Paris.

Pitcher Joe Wood, of the Boston Americans, who was operated on for appendicitis is recovering rapidly. He will be able to play in a few weeks.

Gustav Fristensky, who was defeated in easy fashion by Charley Cutler, has probably engaged in more matches than any other wrestler. He has met exactly 1,252 opponents and has won 98 per cent of his matches. He regards his recent defeat as only a temporary setback.

Hank O'Day will be retained as manager of the Chicago Cubs despite the change in ownership.

Charlie White, Chicago lightweight, who was given a popular decision over Jimmy Duffy, the Buffalo boxer, a few weeks ago, will meet Duffy again April 9. Duffy's decisive victory over Freddie Welsh, the British veteran, stamps him among the best lightweights in the country.

Hemingway, a recruit from the Southern Michigan League, is being touted by the St. Louis Browns as a swell infielder, although he joined the major-league club as a pitcher.

Pitcher Warhop, of the New York Americans, signed a contract calling for a big decrease in salary. He confessed that he deserved a cut, and refused to jump to the Federal League.

Snow and sleet prevented racing at Charleston, S. C., recently. It was the first time in the track history of the South that snow interfered with a race program.

Nebraska University has cut baseball from its athletic list on the grounds that professional baseball in Lincoln detracts from the interest in the college sport.

When a referee at Denver, Col., gave Stanley Yoakum a decision over Joe Sherman, he started a riot. The fans apparently thought the decision was unjust.

Manager Griffith, of the Washington team, has prohibited boxing bouts among his players.

Boy Captures Cup.

Ralph Spotts, the 13-year-old son of the champion, Ralph L. Spotts, captured the principal prize at the Larchmont Yacht Club traps recently. It was the Accumulation Cup—a season prize—and by winning the leg in the match he won the cup outright, for he had previously won two legs for it.

It was one of the prettiest fights for first place that has been seen at Larchmont. Six men, or five men and a boy, tied with full scores of 50 each, and when it came to the shoot-off young Spotts beat them all by breaking 50 "birds" straight, on a "miss-and-out" contest in which A. L. Burns, his nearest competitor, missed his eighteenth "bird."

Ralph L. Spotts was the winner of both the high-gun scratch contest, with 139 out of the possible 150, and of the 10 and 15 "bird" scratch matches, and the Take Home Trophy match.

Will Raise Sunflower Crop.

L. C. Phillips, of St. Louis, Mo., will plant 1,000 acres of his southeast Missouri land in sunflowers this year as a further demonstration that this plant can be cultivated with profit on land where other crops may not thrive so well. Phillips, who owns approximately 4,500 acres, half of which is in cultivation, has been experimenting for several years in the culture of sunflowers, whose seed, when mixed with other seed, makes excellent chicken and hog feed.

Finds $10,000 in Tin Cans.

Mrs. Mary Butts, former housekeeper for Jacob Oswell, who died recently, found $10,000 secreted in cans in the cellar of his home, at Masonville, N. Y. The money was in gold and bills. Oswell distrusted banks and believed in taking care of his own money.

Two Soldiers Called Heroes.

Corporals Gillam and Gunn, of the Thirty-first Company, C, A. C., at Fort Caswell, N. C., will receive Carnegie medals, if their friends are successful in their attempt to get rewards for the two men for their brave rescue of

Corporal Miller and Private Linsmaier. The latter pair were stranded on some marshy ground when the engine in their little craft gave out. When the United States life-savers gave up the search for them Gillam and Gunn entered a small boat and started looking for their companions, who were located almost frozen after having stood in water knee-deep for thirty-six hours. On account of the high sea the boat could not go near the two men, so Gunn swam to them and assisted them one at a time to the craft.

Big House Host to Workers.

How large employers have come to take an interest in the pleasure of those who work for them was illustrated in New York a few nights ago when the Standard Mail Order Company turned over the entire eleventh floor of its new building for a dance and tango contest for its 1,200 employees. A large orchestra furnished the music, and the contest was decided by Willie Collier, Silvo Hein, and Walter Perceval. Jewelry was awarded as prizes.

Odd Facts About Animals.

Why do rabbits burrow, while hares make their homes on the ground? This question has often been asked. The rabbit has to burrow because of its defective speed. It cannot outrun its enemies, therefore it obtains immunity from attack by digging a retreat in the ground.

Most lions and tigers are too weak in lung power to run more than half a mile at a time.

It is not generally known that the muskrat is the most important fur-bearing animal of North America. In one year alone—1910—5,500,00 muskrat skins were put upon the market, realizing to the trappers a sum approximately $1,700,000.

More than 4,500,000 gray squirrels were killed last year in Siberia for their fur. The tails alone weighed over twenty-one tons.

In Borneo winged creatures are encountered where one would least expect them. Flying fish, the size of herrings, are found in all the waters, and there is the flying fox, the well-known fruit-eating bat, which the Malays call "kruang."

Next to the pelt of the silver fox and the ermine, the chinchilla, of South America, carries on its back about the most expensive material used for clothing. The chinchilla is found high up on the eastern slope of the Andes, in sections of Peru, Bolivia, and Chile. In appearance it somewhat resembles our common squirrel.

Cork-legged Skater Excels.

Skaters who crowded the ice on Ridley Park Lake, Collingdale, Pa., were much interested in the skill of John Evans, a business man, of Collingdale, with only one leg. He can give many skaters with two legs cards and spades in speed or in fancy skating.

He has an artificial leg and is so skillful in its use it would not be noticed.

Tennessee Bars Give Up Liquor Licenses.

The only Federal licenses held in Memphis, Tenn., and as a rule, throughout Tennessee, are those in possession of wholesalers, druggists, and river boats. Saloons which have been operating since July, 1909, in violation of the prohibition law were closed the first day of March in compliance with the prohibition "nuisance" act passed by the legislature last fall. The law is intended to prevent the sale of intoxicants by saloons and resorts by declaring such places nuisances.

The State supreme court, however, has ruled that the second section of the law, limiting shipments of liquor into the State to one gallon for family use is invalid, as this is a regulation of interstate commerce.

Makes Coins in Prison Cell.

The fascination of counterfeiting had such a hold on Thomas Blanton, serving three years in the California State prison for that crime, that he made money in the penitentiary. He was caught manufacturing $5-gold pieces in his cell. He had a complete set of tools, which he probably made under the eyes of the guards in the machine shops.

Cannot Write; Makes Million.

In a will signed with a cross—because he never learned to read or write—Mathew J. McIntyre, who made $1,000,000 raising hogs, left the bulk of his estate to St. Patrick's Church, in Long Island City to be used for the support of the parochial school, so that the children of his parish might have the education he was denied. Nine nephews and nieces contested the will, but the surrogate court of Queens County overruled their contest.

Fourteen Years for Set-gun Death.

William Schmidt was found guilty in circuit court, at Wausau, Wis., of murder in the second degree. He placed a set gun in his orchard August 22, and two days later George Cramer, aged 16, was shot. He lived until December 4. A motion for a new trial was denied and Schmidt was sentenced to fourteen years in the State prison.

Did Not Speak in Ten Years.

"Buckskin Joe" Eaton, the hermit, of Mount Baker, Wash., is dead, after having lived a solitary life for the past ten years. In that time, so far as is known, he never spoke a dozen words. He lived by raising potatoes and hunting, would not allow a domestic animal about his place and appeared to be intellectual. It is rumored that his name is not Eaton, and that he is the brother of a United States senator.

Kidnapers to Face Drastic United States Law.

As a result of the mysterious disappearance a year ago of little Catherine Winters, of Newcastle, Ind., Congressman F. H. Gray, of the Sixth Indiana District, in which Newcastle is located, is advocating a Federal law to punish kidnaping with an extreme penalty of life imprisonment or death.

The exact provision of the bill as it finally will be drawn, however, will not be determined until Gray has examined into just how far he can legally go in some of the provisos he wishes to include.

As safeguard from abduction by gypsies or nomadic tribes the bill may require registrations of such tribes at stated periods each year with Federal officers in the territory in which they are traveling.

Congressman Gray was in Newcastle the day following little Catherine Winters' disappearance.

"It was as if a great disaster had befallen the town," he said, speaking of the circumstances which caused him

to attempt to prevent other tragic mysteries. "The stores and factories of the whole town were shut down so that the people might join in the search.

"I suppose no law that can be passed now will aid the case of little Catherine Winters. Even if she is found and her abductors are caught, they would have to be punished under laws in effect at the time the offense was committed.

"But if it is possible to frame a law to throw further safeguards around our children, by extending to them the protecting hand of Uncle Sam, then I say it is our duty to do it."

Pastor and Flock Take Rest.

When Reverend A. Edwin Keigwin, a Presbyterian minister, of New York, announced to his congregation that he needed a vacation, 300 members of his flock decided that they, too, needed a rest. Consequently they chartered a special train, and all went to Washington, D. C., together. They spent four days at the national capital. Entire families in some cases locked up their homes and abandoned all business and household cares.

Lovesick Mexicans in Duel.

Two Mexicans, in love with the same woman, locked themselves in a room, at Los Angeles, Cal., and shot each other with the same revolver, after having tossed a coin for the first shot.

Louis Vida lost the toss, and, calmly standing opposite Pablo Orozco, gave him the word to shoot. He fell with a bullet through the lungs, but rose, and, taking the weapon, waited for Orozco to give the word to fire. Orozco gave the word and received a bullet in the head.

Raw Chicken Saves His Life.

Four raw chickens which Joseph Comiskey, 17 years old, of Richmond, Va., found in a refrigerator car, at Philadelphia, Pa., in which he had been locked, were all that saved him from a death by starvation and freezing. By eating the raw meat he retained enough strength to enable him to walk about in the car, and prevent his freezing. He was confined for four days, having been brought to Philadelphia from Richmond.

Kills Fifty-two Feet of Reptiles.

Walter Rowles, who lives near Almyra, Ark., is the champion snake killer of that vicinity. Seeing a blue-racer crawl under a stump, he pried it up. He killed the racer, one water moccasin three and one-half feet long; and thirteen rattlesnakes, of which nine were more than three and one-half feet in length. In all there were fifty-two feet of snakes. Rattlesnakes were considered scarce in this neighborhood.

Overocean Flight Soon.

Transatlantic aëroplane flights with present-day flying machines are a possibility of the near future, in the opinion of Doctor Alexander Graham Bell, who spoke at Washington recently before the Federal School Men's Club. A system of gears for increasing the speed of propellers in the decreased resistance of higher altitudes, he said, probably would solve the problem. Machines of fifty miles an hour speed under ordinary conditions, he said, at proper altitude traveled 100 miles an hour.

"I think," he added, "we may safely say that we will see airships crossing the Atlantic at a height of two miles above the earth.

"The question of sufficient oxygen for the driver is solved by the tremendous speed itself, for the air striking the face would be condensed. As for the cold at such a height, the exhaust of the machine furnishes a source of heat easily applicable to keep the aviator warm."

Unearth Eleven Thousand Arrowheads.

While on a hunting trip James and Bert Stanley, of Grove, Okla., discovered a cache of 11,000 arrowheads buried at the foot of a giant tree. It is said to be the largest number of arrow points ever found in one place. Experts declare the man who made them was an expert. They are of a finer quality of flint than most arrowheads.

Tris Speaker's Pay Highest.

Tris Speaker's two years' baseball contract for a salary of $37,000 works out as nearly $15,000 a year more than the salary received by the best professional football players in England.

Recently about 164,000 persons paid $38,080 to witness four principal football matches in England, yet of eighty-two players taking part in them not one has an income exceeding $22.50 weekly, while the greater proportion only receive $20.

Texas Town Owns Police Dog.

"Bum" is only a dog, but he is an efficient policeman, and is almost indispensable to Quanah, Texas. Four times each day he makes trips to the depot to meet trains and to inspect the visitors who stop there. If a suspicious stranger alights from the train Bum hurries to the marshal and imparts the information by loud barks. He also reports at the schoolhouse every morning and apparently knows every pupil. Recently he showed his intelligence by leaping into a covered express wagon when a cowboy tried to lasso him for biting a pony's heels. His license and food are paid by the merchants of the town.

Raise Little Pig in Incubator.

The strangest "incubator baby" in Oklahoma is a little pig being raised by artificial means on the farm of T. J. Cuneo. All but one of the hogs on the Cuneo farm died of the cholera. The survivor was placed in an incubator and is being fed from a bottle. At the rate it is growing it will need a hothouse soon.

Dodgers Get Dick Egan.

The Brooklyn club, it has been said, has closed an option with the Cincinnati club for the services of Infielder Dick Egan. President Ebbets agreed to take Egan from Herrmann for $5,000, and when Manager Robinson became convinced that Tinker would not report to the Dodgers it was decided to close. Egan probably will play shortstop for the Brooklyns. In the opinion of George Stallings and Clark Griffith he will prove a valuable substitute for Tinker. Egan was ordered to report to Robinson at Augusta.

Lambs Grow to Sheep Waiting for Railroad.

A trainload of lambs that grew into sheep before they were placed on the market after leaving their pasture in western Colorado for Stockdale, Ill., in May, 1908, is the basis of a suit instituted in the district court against the

Rock Island Railroad. The plaintiffs are Frederick Kaling and Lee Simonson, and the number of sheep involved is 22,334, for which judgments of $533,926.22 are demanded. The lambs, it is said, were delivered to the railroad in May, 1908, for delivery to Stockdale, from which place they were to be marketed. It is charged that the railroad company kept the sheep without trying to market them until they had grown into full-fleeced sheep.

Prison for Starving Man Who Steals Bread.

Because he preferred a prison to starvation Michael Nicola, of Lynn, Mass., who stole a five-cent loaf of bread from a show case, must spend three months in jail. Nicola, who told the police that he had been out of work for weeks, received the sentence in the local police court.

"I did not have a thing to eat for the past thirty-six hours," he said. "I was faint from hunger. I believe if I had not taken the loaf of bread I would have fallen on the street from hunger. I tried to borrow some money from a friend, but could not get a cent from him. I was desperate and took the loaf of bread out of the show case in front of the store to keep from starving to death."

Wears Nuggets for Buttons.

Wearing a jacket with buttons formed of gold nuggets weighing from fifteen to twenty ounces each, valued at $2,000 and weighing about nine pounds, Mrs. J. A. Whittman, a pretty young Australian woman, arrived in San Francisco with her husband, a millionaire miner.

Handcuff Convicts to Trees.

According to a committee in California which investigated the system of using county prisoners on the public roads, the convicts who refuse to work are handcuffed to trees and fed on bread and water until they are willing to do so. It is alleged that ten prisoners, who declined to work because they had appealed for new trials, were tied to trees, their hands being gradually raised until the weights of their bodies was placed on the wrists.

Scratch of Chicken Fatal.

Colonel Thomas Curry, 62 years old, of Greenwood, Del., is dead, the result of a scratch by a chicken. When the spur of one of his fowls raked the skin of his hand, it caused a sore which later became infected, causing blood poisoning. He was one of the largest owners of standard-bred horses in the State of Delaware.

"Arizona Charlie" Still Walks Tracks.

"Arizona Charlie," the most famous trackwalker in the country, is still alive. Although the Pacific coast newspapers have been reporting him dead, the old man continues to trudge over the railroad ties of the desert and mountains. O. C. Morgan, an Espee engineer, who, in the course of years, has chased his train past Arizona Charlie hundreds of times, has positive knowledge that the trackwalker is alive, well, and still on his beat.

While not employed by the railroad company, he made it his duty to inspect the tracks, and in that line there has been none better. His beat has been largely between El Paso and Yuma, Ariz. He is known to train crews, station agents, and section men all over the Southwest.

Although somewhat mentally unbalanced, he has discovered many track ills and has always been painstaking in reporting such to the proper railroad officials. Each time the officials have politely thanked him and occasionally he has had other rewards. Railroad eating houses and other similar places have fed him and he has made enough money to buy clothes. This year his health began failing, and he was importuned to leave the track, but he has always insisted that his duty was there, that it was his mission to save lives from wrecks, and he intends to keep it up just as long as he can see and walk.

Near Benson a few weeks ago was found a body partially eaten by coyotes that was thought to be that of Charlie. Some men who viewed it were positive in their conclusions, just as other men have been on former occasions when dead bodies were found near railroad tracks in the desert or mountains. While the news of Charlie's death was spreading over the country Engineer Morgan found his old-time trackwalker friend again.

John L. in Word Battle.

John L. Sullivan, one-time champion of the heavyweights, and the subject of more popularity in his day than any prize fighter, is still fighting, but not in ring togs. He is having a wordy battle with "Bob" Fitzsimmons, who also was champion at one time.

When Sullivan remarked that the New York State Boxing Commission acted wisely in barring Fitzsimmons from the ring, he brought the wrath of the Australian pug on himself.

"Because that old stiff hasn't had a punch left in him for twenty years is no sign that I am down and out as he is," declared Fitzsimmons. "He never could fight much, but I am still good enough to whip the best of this crop of 'white hopes' if they will just let me at them."

Sullivan retired from the ring long ago, and is now a baseball fan. He declares baseball is the greatest sport in the world, and is growing greater. He predicts it will become an international sport.

Use Auto for Sawing Wood.

Two men in Lewistown, Pa., rigged up an old automobile to saw wood. Placing a small platform in front of the car, they attached a circular saw and pulley. When the automobile is not in use for other purposes, they put the belt on and start the engine. They have done a profitable business, going from house to house, sawing cordwood and old crossties.

No Candy for State Official.

Governor Byrne, of South Dakota, issued a statement calling for the dismissal of Emil Gunther, of the State insurance department. In his statement Governor Byrn said:

"Any officer or emplayee of this State who will subm for approval a voucher for candy and theater tickets can not remain in office while I am governor of South Dako It makes no difference whether such practice has be followed in another State, it will not be tolerated for moment in this State."

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